

Vicarious Violence and Its Context

**An inquiry into the psychology of
violence**

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Abstract

Experiencing violence vicariously through the medium of popular film is the topic of this investigation. What is enjoyable about watching film violence, what is gained from the experience, and more crucially, what violent film means to its viewers are explored. This research is particularly pertinent within the current cultural climate; violent film is highly successful yet the popular press, politicians and psychologists alike have claimed that it can influence individuals to commit violent crime. In fact, the literature search revealed that the major concern of previous psychological investigations into media violence has been to establish a causal link between exposure to violence in the media and violent behaviour in real life. Additionally, many of the existing literature deals with television violence and the child audience. These past studies have made little attempt to study the experiencing of violence vicariously but have prioritised the effects which may be induced by the presence of violence in popular culture.

This discursive inquiry (Edwards and Potter, 1992) is conducted within the paradigm of human scientific psychology (Giorgi, 1994, 1970; Polkinghorne, 1983) and it adopts an evolving research design that is data-driven rather than guided by a predetermined theory (Cresswell, 1998; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Experiences of violence via film and encounters with violence in real life were investigated in order to compare the differences between them. Three studies were conducted with a sample of fifty-four experiential accounts, involving twenty-one individual interviews and eight inquiry groups. This discursive data was analysed qualitatively using an adaptation of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999; Smith, Osborne, Jarman and de Lacey, 1999).

Through the analyses a series of codes were elicited from the data which are used to describe experience. A code represents the phenomenology of violence, that is, it reveals both the shared and unshared aspects of individuals' experiencing of violence vicariously. The codes have shown that attributing meanings to film violence is crucial to the nature of individuals' experiences and that a complex set of contextual factors are at work in this meaning-making process. These include whether the violence occurs in real life or is experienced receptively via film, the gender of the viewer and their previous experience of violence, the genre of the film, the realism of the representations of violence, and whether or not individuals are able to rationalise the

occurrence of violence within the narrative of the film. Several positive codes were gleaned from individuals' discursive accounts which illustrates that watching violent film can be a pleasurable experience. Nevertheless, on occasions film violence appears to be without meaning, which provokes extreme discomfort for the viewer. To overcome this, viewers construct narratives which can explicate the occurrence of violence. Therefore, rather than rejecting the violence as meaningless, it is narrativised in order to make sense of it. In short, this study has revealed that the primary concern when experiencing violence vicariously through the medium of popular film is to make it meaningful.

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A Psychological Inquiry into Vicarious Violence

1.1 Introduction

Violence is a complex component of humankind which excites extreme emotions in those who experience it. The same is true of vicarious violence, that is, violence which is experienced in the imagination through some external medium. Experiencing violence vicariously is a long-performed custom in the civilised world and this fact alone renders it an authentic topic for psychology. Moreover, the paradox inherent within experiencing violence in this way further corroborates the need to investigate. In the realm of real life violence can be devastating, it has the potential to change lives and even to kill yet within the context of literature, theatre, art, and cinema, it constitutes a form of entertainment. This project focuses on just one kind of vicarious violence, that which is experienced via the medium of popular film. However, the inquiry is often opened up to include television violence.

Film violence is both deplored and embraced by the public. The 1990s saw numerous examples of film violence despite attempts made by politicians, members of the press, and scientists who have united in the effort to bring about their downfall. Films which are relevant to this project, in that they contain representations of violence, include for instance, *Fight Club* (1999), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), *LA Confidential* (1997), *Scream* (1996), *The Usual Suspects* (1995), *Natural Born Killers* (1994), and *Reservoir Dogs* (1992). In fact, violence has been widespread in the cinema throughout the growth of the industry. Films such as *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1920), *The Roaring Twenties* (1939), *The Wild One* (1953), and *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967)¹ all tell stories of violence. However, whilst such films have pervaded the cinemas of the Western world, there exists a constant contention against their presence. In 1996 Virginia Bottomley, the then Secretary of State for National Heritage in Britain, campaigned against the portrayal of violence on television by promoting the use of the V-chip (a censoring device used by viewers to control the violent content of programmes). Similarly, the national press frequently publishes articles which support stricter regulations on television violence (e.g. Whitworth, 1999; Travis, 1999; Poulter,

¹ The full references for films mentioned in the thesis are in the filmography. From this point forward no dates will be included in the body of the text.

1998) and which sometimes go beyond simply offering an opinion by holding film violence responsible for crimes which have been committed (e.g. Jenkins, 1999; Dworkin, 1996). The controversy surrounding the portrayal of violence on television and in film, together with this notion of responsibility, has guided the majority of scientific inquiry to date concerning the issues of media violence.

1.2 Media Violence Revisited

This project is inspired by the enduring success of violent cinema and its objective is to explore the experiencing of violence vicariously via the medium of popular film. It is assumed that to achieve such success violent film must be an appealing form of entertainment in contemporary Western culture. Hence, the aim of this research is to establish the ways in which viewers attribute meanings to representations of violence on screen. It is proposed that through identifying the meaningfulness of experiencing representations of violence via film this study will be able to suggest what it is viewers gain from such experiences.

This work is a 'revisiting' rather than a completely new initiative because in tackling media violence it deals with a subject which has featured frequently in psychological studies of the past. However, what is new is the angle from which this old topic is approached. As Chapter 2 will reveal previous studies have been many and varied in both their design and their findings. These studies range from laboratory experiments (e.g. Berkowitz and Rawlings, 1963; Bandura, Ross and Ross, 1963a, 1963b, 1961) and experimental field studies (e.g. Feshbach and Singer, 1971) to correlation studies (e.g. Belson, 1978; McIntyre and Teevan, 1972) and longitudinal studies (e.g. Schramm, Lyle and Parker, 1961). What is common across the majority of this body of research is the aim. Psychology has been so preoccupied in its desire to explain the occurrence of violence in society that it has attempted to attribute it to violence which is portrayed on television and in film. Many theories have been developed within the discipline to try to determine the causes of violence, for example, instinctivism (e.g. Ardrey, 1976; Lorenz, 1966; Freud, 1923), behaviourism (e.g. Skinner, 1971, 1961), the social learning theory (e.g. Berkowitz, 1989), and the frustration-aggression hypothesis (e.g. Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer and Sears, 1939), yet this breadth of literature has been largely ignored in the study of media violence. Rather one perspective has dominated, which is comparable in its philosophy to the social learning theory. This leading approach and its relevant empirical research has become known in

both psychology and the wider scientific community as 'effects research', the 'effects model', or the 'effects hypothesis'.

Effects research is concerned with testing the hypothesis that 'exposure to violent media content will increase violent behaviour in real life'. It is assumed that media violence has a pejorative effect on its audience because it has the power to influence subsequent behaviour. In other words, individuals learn inappropriate social behaviour from repeated viewing of violent media. The findings of such studies, however, are confused and inconclusive as Chapter 2 will illustrate.

There are several fundamental limitations with the effects hypothesis which have been systematically overlooked by those who attempt to support it. This project attempts to rectify some of these mistakes by adopting a novel approach to the subject of media violence. Although the design of studies has been varied they each comply with the same methodological perspective which falls under the paradigm of psychology conceived as a natural science. Positivism has been the dominant methodological philosophy in psychology for decades (e.g. Kvale, 1996; Valentine, 1992) and it has influenced the entire process of scientific investigation from its conception and the collection of data, to the manipulation of that data and the conclusions drawn. Chapter 3 will discuss at length the differences between the tradition of positivism and the approach adopted in this project. It will be argued that through a shift in the philosophical assumptions made psychology can progress substantially by asking questions which have been impossible under the restraints of psychology conceived as a natural science. Instead, this project takes a discursive approach to its subject matter (Harré and Stearns, 1995; Harré, 1994; Edwards and Potter, 1992) and falls within the phenomenologically sensitive approach of psychology conceived as a human science (e.g. Giorgi, 1994, 1970; Polkinghorne, 1988, 1983).

This project is made up of a series of three studies which are outlined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. The objectives of the three studies are intricately interwoven as they each progress in design and depth from the previous one. The strategy adopted in this research is essentially exploratory and open-ended, comparable in this sense to the data-driven method of Grounded Theory (e.g. Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The implication of this is that, instead of embarking on the research process with a predetermined notion of what the effects of violent media are, it is

possible to ask those who experience violence vicariously through this channel what is the significance of this activity in the context of their lived experience. Therefore, rather than attempting to support an existing theory, this project aims to use the data collected in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the experiencing of violence via the medium of popular film.

1.3 Research Questions

The objective of this research is to explore individuals' experiencing of violence vicariously via the channel of popular film. One of the primary aims is to establish how individuals define violence and to reveal the ways in which they make sense of their experiences. Further, this project aims to reveal both the nature of individuals' experiences of film violence and what is gained from experiencing violence vicariously through film. The research questions posed in this project therefore are:

- ♦ How do individuals conceive violence and what definitions do they employ?
- ♦ What meanings do individuals attribute to representations of violence in the visual media?
- ♦ What is the nature of experiencing violence vicariously via the medium of popular film?
- ♦ What do individuals gain from experiencing violence vicariously via the medium of popular film?

These questions are pertinent to the entire project and they are answered in stages through the three studies conducted. Before moving on to the specific nature of this research, however, it is necessary to review the relevant existing literature. This will inform and contextualise the following account of this project.

2

Stories of Violence

2.1 Introduction

Throughout history the occurrence of violence could be described as one of the few certainties in life (e.g. Bok, 1998; Bloch, 1998; Warner, 1998). Violence is an enduring condition of humankind and because of this the nature and causes of violence have dominated psychological inquiry of human behaviour and experience. Inquiries into violence, however, can be particularly problematic for the researcher and controversial in terms of responses to them: studying violence is problematic because through their discoveries about human violence, researchers are also unearthing aspects of themselves as human beings which may be unpleasant or unnerving; and it is controversial because violence is considered an anti-social, and indeed criminal, activity in contemporary Western culture, an activity which should perhaps be eradicated rather than understood. Nevertheless, much has been written about violence and thousands of studies conducted with the aim of getting to the bottom of this problem, violence. This chapter offers a critical evaluation of the investigations into violence and, in particular, the experiencing of violence vicariously via some form of entertainment.

Violence is a complex topic which demands serious contemplation. This being the case, what follows is divided into four sections: Psychological Research, Mass Communications Research, The Psychology of Violence and Aggression, and The History of Violence in Popular Culture. These sections should not be viewed in isolation. However, on the contrary, the aspects of violence discussed in this chapter are essentially interwoven and interdependent. Further, it is the disregard for the inherent interconnectedness of the stories of violence which has led to the ceaseless confusion and misinterpretations both in scientific and public communities.

The majority of this chapter is concerned with the investigation of media violence and the audience's experiencing of it. The first two sections, 2.2 *Psychological Research* and 2.3 *Mass Communications Research*, summarise the empirical studies conducted which have aimed to further the knowledge of media violence. It is the visual media, i.e. television and cinema, that is the focus in these sections. Psychological Research and

Mass Communications Research are separated because, despite the common subject matter, they represent work from two distinct disciplines. Due to this they draw on different theoretical perspectives which is compounded by their fundamentally distinct origins: psychology's concern is first and foremost the human subject and consequently human experiences of social phenomena, such as the media; the discipline of mass communications, on the other hand, commences with the media in its various forms before moving on to study people as media consumers. The inclusion of mass communications research in a psychology thesis may be questioned, nevertheless, the subject area of this project, i.e. the experiencing of violence via the medium of film, is one that transcends traditional discipline boundaries. Moreover, communications researchers have been as prolific as psychologists in their attempts to understand the nature of violent media and what it is people gain from them, hence to ignore this body of work would be misguided.

The fourth section, *2.4 The Psychology of Violence and Aggression*, summarises the range of theories that have been devised by psychologists to explain the occurrence of violence in humankind. Through reference to disparate theories, such as instinctivism and behaviourism, this discussion involves the issues of nature versus nurture as well as the perhaps more fundamental dichotomy of reductionism and humanism.

Throughout this chapter it will become clear that violence is not simply a modern concern but that it has been evident throughout the development of civilisation. Thus, the penultimate section, *2.5 The History of Violence in Popular Culture*, aims to illustrate that it is not the action of violence alone which is an historical component of humanity, but that experiencing violence via some kind of medium, be it motion pictures, a theatrical play, or a bed time story, is also ancient in origin.

Once the occurrence of violence, its history, and research about it have been considered they will be summarised in the final section of this chapter, *2.6 Summary*, in terms of the focus of this project, i.e. the experiencing of violence receptively via the visual media. It is worth noting that, although the subject matter of this project is film violence and the mature audience, the majority of the next section deals with television violence and focuses, in the main, on child audiences. However, this is due to the dominance of these particular variables within the existing body of research and as such they are relevant to the development of this project.

2.2 Psychological Research

Thousands of studies in psychology have been devoted to the issues of media violence, however, a great proportion have been simply fuelled by the belief that:

“there [is] too much violence on television.”

(Report of the Committee on Broadcasting, 1962, cited in Glucksmann, 1971:15)

Since the introduction of television to the Western world its presence has become more and more widespread and one of the main complaints which has been reported over time in opinion polls has been the extent of programmes that contain representations of violence (Docherty, 1990; Heath, Jowell and Curtice, 1985). This has been a source of concern for the public and for psychologists alike, especially in respect of children who are perceived as vulnerable and who may, because of their proneness to impressionability, imitate what they see on the screen. The body of psychological work which has developed has acted in response to this possibility of imitation through focusing its efforts on establishing whether or not exposure to violence via the visual media will lead to increased violent behaviour in real life. As a result, such research became known as 'effects research' due to its preoccupation with determining the effects of watching violent television or film material. The assumption underlying the most pronounced version of the 'effects hypothesis' (or 'effects model') is summarised by Wertham (1962):

“When young people see dancing, they want to dance, when they see appetising food, drinks and sweets, they want to buy them. It stands to reason that if they see violence on the screen, they acquire a certain taste for it, even if only unconsciously.”

(Wertham, 1962, cited in Glucksmann, 1971: 16)

In 1959, the Heinrich bibliography listed 2500 titles which investigated the issue of media violence (cf. Glucksmann, 1971), the majority of those referred to in this chapter, however, were conducted since then. A number of varying methods have been adopted in effects research and some have focussed on children while others observe adult responses to representations of violence. In short, the literature is both expansive and confusing. The discussion begins by considering what is meant by 'violence' and proceeds with an evaluation of some of the studies conducted.

Defining Violence

The first issue to be faced in empirical research concerning violence in the media is to define 'violence'. Problems occurred very early in the field resulting in a division of opinion. Some believed that it was the quantity of violence in the visual media that was significant and many surveys were conducted. Dale (1933) found that out of 115 films, 406 crimes were committed and 45 films portrayed a murder; Smythe (1954) studied American network television and discovered that every ten minutes a violent act or threat of violence was transmitted. The findings of both Himmelweit, Oppenheim and Vince (1958) and Head (1954) helped to fuel the debate about children's exposure to representations of violence: Himmelweit et al (1958) found that 20% of the programmes shown at times when children are most likely to watch contained scenes of violence and aggression and Head (1954) concluded that in films intended for children, 7.6% contained acts of aggression or immorality. Are these figures meaningful in terms of discovering what effects violence in the media has? Himmelweit et al (1958) argued to the contrary that the context in which violence is portrayed is more significant than simply counting violent acts:

"Shooting is not very disturbing, nor fighting on the ground, but injury by knife or dagger is far more so; swords and other weapons occupy an intermediate position."

(Himmelweit et al, 1958, cited in Glucksmann, 1971: 24)

Similar debates occurred within broadcasting organisations. The British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) code distinguishes between "violence [and] violation, which is worse":

"Brutality is not identical to violence, and violence is not the same thing as combat. Nevertheless, combat, which is a healthy thing, and brutality which is not, both have an element of violence and overlap with each other."

(Report of the Committee on Broadcasting, 1962, cited in Glucksmann, 1971: 15)

Nevertheless, these kinds of restrictions do not always hold in specific cases:

"Torture is normally inadvisable, yet in *Jesus of Nazareth* the crucifixion was dramatised: in a particular context many subjects which would at first sight seem wrong for children's viewing can be justified."

(Report of the Committee on Broadcasting, 1962 cited in Glucksmann, 1971: 15)

Researchers became more specific, however, in their definitions of violence. An example of one such definition is that adopted by Gerbner and his colleagues:

"[Violence is] the overt expression of physical force (with or without a weapon, against self or others) or other compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed or actually hurting or killing."

(Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli, 1980: 11)

Using the above definition Signorielli, Gross and Morgan (1982) found that in 1979, 80.3% of all television programmes and 91.9% of weekend programmes contained violence. There are problems with this kind of definition, however, because it becomes fixed, excluding scenes containing psychological torture or manipulation which often occur in dramas and films, especially of the horror and thriller genres. Still, the focus continues to be upon the quantity of violence in the visual media. The suggestion that the meanings of the violence portrayed, i.e. its quality, are the essential factor in understanding media violence remain undeveloped. These problems of definition are not a separate issue but pervade the studies evaluated in the following sections of Psychological Research.

Traditional Effects Research

Once it had been established that a large proportion of television programmes contain representations of violence, studies began to ask whether or not exposure to violence in the visual media leads to any direct effects in the viewers' behaviour. There are almost as many reviews of this so-called 'effects research' as there are individual studies, some of the most recent ones being Cumberbatch (in press), Harris (1999), Huesmann, Moise and Podolski (1997), Gunter (1994), Cumberbatch and Howitt (1989) and Leibert and Sprafkin (1988). This being the case, a brief summary is sufficient in this context to reveal the level of understanding to date.

Many different methodological approaches have been adopted in research projects concerning the effects of media violence. Bandura, Ross and Ross (1963a, 1963b, 1961) have become landmark experimental studies, for instance. Their notorious “bobo doll” study found that when children watch a film in which adults are portrayed hitting a bobo doll they will imitate this aggressive action. A second well known project is that of Berkowitz and Rawlings (1963) which was based both on the frustration-aggression hypothesis (Dollard, Bood, Miller, Mowrer and Sears, 1939) and the concept of aggression anxiety. Berkowitz and Rawlings (1963) argued that people would only show increased levels of aggression in certain circumstances due to the social conception that violence is an antisocial activity. They found that, for example, the aggression levels of participants rose if they believed that the violence was justified within the context of the film (Berkowitz and Rawlings, 1963). Not all effects researchers support the hypothesis that watching violent media content leads to violent behaviour however. Mueller, Donnestein and Hallam (1983), Croce (1964) and Feshbach (1955) represent the polar position of catharsis, i.e. that exposure to violent media will reduce aggressive conduct in real life.

Other methods used by effects researchers are experimental field studies and correlation studies, both of which were developed in order to overcome the lack of ecological validity in laboratory experiments. Those referred to in the literature include Belson (1978), Parke, Berkowitz, Leyens, West and Sebastian (1977), McIntyre and Teevan (1972), Feshbach and Singer (1971) and Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961), for example. The general format of such studies involves the observation of participants in their natural environment, for instance Belson (1978) studied boys at a London Boarding School. Houseparents, teachers or parents are usually elected as observers who are responsible for recording both the amount of violent media content to which participants are exposed and the level of violent behaviour amongst them within a set period of time.

An overwhelming majority of effects researchers claim to have found support for the hypothesis that viewing violent media leads to increased violent behaviour and it is this position which has infiltrated to the core of public opinion. The issue of media violence is highly political and the popular press are guilty of perpetuating effects ideology. Whenever there is a tragedy involving violence such as Thomas Hamilton's murders and suicide in Dunblane or the killing of James Bulger, the newspapers automatically

blame the presence of violence in the visual media for society's downfall. Public consensus therefore sides with the traditional research in its support of the effects hypothesis.

Nevertheless, there are fundamental problems inherent within the methods by which researchers have obtained support for a causal link between media violence and violent in society. Firstly, the contrived circumstances in which Bandura et al (1963a, 1963b, 1961) observed the pseudo-aggressive imitation amongst child participants cannot be compared to a real life situation. Hartley (1964) stresses that children will express feelings toward inanimate objects that they would not dare display toward people. Furthermore, a profound criticism proffered by Cumberbatch (1989) questions the core of effects research rationale; there are concrete boundaries between the knowledge of violence, the desire to act violently, and actually committing a violent act. Hence, the evidence of increased aggression in an experimental laboratory does not automatically confirm the effects hypothesis.

There are equally problematic elements within both experimental field studies and correlation studies. The foundation upon which both types of project rests is the observation and categorisation of violent media content and violent behaviour amongst participants. The work of McIntyre and Teevan (1972) and Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961), for instance, was conducted within a traditional positivist framework meaning that the subjectivities within observers' conceptualisations of media violence and violent conduct were not taken into account. The implications of this are that the supposed objective data which was then used to calculate correlations was in fact an amalgamation of the observers' idiosyncratic perceptions of violence. This means that instead of simply comparing two occurrences that are defined in a fixed manner, i.e. exposure to violent media content and violent behaviour, the researchers were dealing with two fluid, qualitative phenomena without taking into consideration the complexity inherent within them. In short, it is not only the methods adopted which are fundamentally flawed in effects research but also its conceptual framework.

Summary of Psychological Research

A phrase taken from Howitt's (1982) text, *Mass Media and Social Problems*, can be used to illustrate the significance of the conceptualisation of 'the media,' and of 'violence,' in the investigation of media violence:

"Who says what to whom through what channel with what effects."

(Howitt, 1982: 18)

This simple definition of mass communications highlights the complexity of the variables involved in the psychological study of media violence. In Howitt's statement the "*who*" refers to the broadcasting/publishing company, "*says what*" is the content and/or portrayal of that content, "*to whom*" means the audience, "*through what channel*" denotes whether it is a television programme, a feature length film, a newspaper article, a video game, etc., and the "*with what effects*" is the outcome of the communication. Unfortunately little attention has been paid to the significance of each of these variables because researchers have been solely consumed with ascertaining the nature of the consequences of media violence, i.e. the effects. This has meant that the details of the participants involved in experiments, the media employed to portray violence, and the methods of measuring responses, have been neglected in the same way that issues of delinquency, socio-economic status and parental identification, for instance, have in the main been overlooked as precipitating factors of violence. In short, the folk-theory of the media (Barker and Brooks, 1998) that violent imagery is harmful to its audience overrides the inconclusive findings of decades of empirical research:

"Films are said to 'hook', 'drug' and 'degrade' audiences, leading to claimed processes which look scientifically-explanatory: 'desensitisation', 'identification', and/or 'role-modelling'. The fact that these three processes, if they occur at all - which is not self-evident, since virtually all the research we've seen on these presumes them - are probably incompatible and indeed mutually exclusive has never stopped their amalgamation. Above all, audiences are 'harmed'. [. . .] Note two central features about all these languages. First, they distrust what people say about themselves - they can't speak for themselves, since they are 'sick' and 'harmed'. And 'we' therefore have to control. A lot of the folk-theoretical languages we have found are to do with control. They are not random - they contain implicit models. But no one is interested in testing these models, not even, by and large, people in our own field of academic research."

(Barker and Brooks, 1998: 303)

It is this kind of prescriptive and controlling attitude that has resulted in a continuing motivation to 'prove' that media violence causes violence in society, together with an incessant denial of anything that suggests it does not. Evidence of a blind adoption of the effects hypothesis as a valid explanation of the consequences of exposure to media violence can still be found in texts such as Harris (1999) and Huesmann et al (1997). Regrettably this leaves psychological researchers in exactly the same position as 30 years ago:

"the only thing we know for certain about [television and] the cinema is that we don't know anything for certain."

(UNESCO, 1961, cited in Glucksmann, 1971: 12)

Psychological research has been severely restricted in most part due to the oversimplification of the issues involved (Barker and Brooks, 1998; Gauntlett, 1995). Studies have been extremely closed in design and limited to the study of observable behaviour and the subsequent statistical analysis of relations between variables. There are many factors inherent in viewing violence which have been consistently ignored, for example, audience identification with media characters has not been investigated by psychologists. Such identification maybe a contributory factor in viewers' responses; opinions and reactions to the personalities and actions of characters may influence the development of attitudes, assumptions, expectations and beliefs about the violence viewed on screen (Barker, 1989). In short, the time has come to change direction and to ask different questions concerning individuals' responses and interpretations to media violence.

The essential problem in psychological research concerns the use of the term, 'violence' as if it were "an easily defined homogeneous group of actions" (Cumberbatch, 1989: 48). In order to properly assess the effect of violence in the visual media it is necessary to first establish what constitutes 'violence'. This is a task which has been systematically ignored in the past. Additionally, in the majority of psychological studies to date no real effort has been made to determine what the viewer actually thinks about what s/he sees on television or at the cinema; the quality of the experience has also been mistakenly overlooked. Violence has persistently played a crucial role in the arts over time (Bloch, 1998; Bok, 1998; Fraser, 1974), yet psychology has not investigated what this means to the receptors of that art, i.e. the

consumers of film and television. Similarly there has been little attention paid to the viewers' concerns. It is assumed by researchers that people dislike violence on television, however, recent opinion polls show that the amount of complaints that specifically refer to violence have vastly reduced (Docherty, 1990; Gunter and Wober, 1988).

In summary, despite the abundant psychological studies investigating violence in the visual media, little can be drawn from them. The largest problem is a conceptual one that is reinforced by the methodological assumptions underlying the research process (these issues will be discussed in-depth in Chapter 3). Some of the limitations of psychological research, however, have been tackled by mass communications researchers, their work is the topic of the next section.

2.3 Mass Communications Research

Research within the discipline of mass communications has been especially prolific in its attempts to explain the nature and appeal of the mass media. Approaches adopted are diverse and in the main constitute general inquiries into the mass media rather than a narrow focus on one issue. However, concerns about the amount of screen violence have been equally strong in mass communications research as in psychological research. Detailed discussions of the projects undertaken by mass communications researchers can be found in texts such as Bryant and Zillmann (1994), Tannenbaum (1980) and Blumler and Katz (1974). What is included here is a brief account of what has been achieved thus far.

Mass communications research is based upon the study of the media themselves and takes them as its starting point. Due to this, mass communications researchers have seriously considered the complexity of the media and their content in a way that is lacking from the psychological research discussed in the previous section. Further, close attention has been paid to the ways in which audience members perceive what is portrayed on television. In addition, there has been a significant development in mass communications studies which focus upon the qualitative responses of the audience to violent media, specifically television programmes and feature films. Such studies are considered vital in the development of knowledge in this area. Through the adoption of methodological tools rejected by psychologists, they have been able to ask questions differently gaining discursive data directly from viewers.

Traditional Mass Communications Research

In order to emphasise the significance of the progress made in audience research, it is firstly necessary to summarise the more traditional perspectives beginning with the cultivation theory developed by George Gerbner and followed by the uses and gratifications perspective.

The motivating concern of the cultivation theory is the dominance of television in the lives of individuals:

"The longer we live with television, the more invisible it becomes. As the number of people who have never lived without television continues to grow, the medium is increasingly taken for granted as an appliance, a piece of furniture, a storyteller, a member of the family [. . .] Television is the source of the most broadly shared images and messages in history."

(Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli, 1986: 17)

Television is the focus of Gerbner's work and he pays particular attention to the misrepresentation of both members of society and events. The theory proposed is that television cultivates the views and perceptions of society so that instead of being exposed to a variety of cultural influences (or indicators), such as parents, teachers, literature, and art, the community is being more and more influenced by what is portrayed on television. Although Gerbner's research projects have been incredibly detailed and persistent over time, there is one fundamental flaw that is immediately recognisable. His description of society may be valid but only within his own Western community, the United States of America. The theory is proposed in a way that suggests it could be applied to any culture. This is not the case; Eastern cultures are clearly excluded as television plays a minimal role there. Moreover, television viewing maybe considered more or less equal in the United Kingdom to that in the United States, but programming schedules are quite distinct (Chandler, 1999).

There are three analytic components to Gerbner's investigations: institutional processes, the message system, and cultivation. The first of these constitutes the analysis of how policies are formed within the media industry to direct the flow of the messages transmitted; the second involves the investigation of what is actually portrayed on television. Week long samples of American network television drama are

taken each year for a content analysis on which the third component is based. The analysis of the extent of cultivation is conducted through questionnaire surveys. Two kinds of questions are asked: those intended to elicit peoples' beliefs about the world, and those which ask about the types and amounts of television viewed. Gerbner et al (1986) assume that if responses relate significantly to the results of television content analyses, then attitudes and beliefs must be cultivated by the world of television:

"[Television is] not a window on or reflection of the world, but a world in itself."

(McQuail and Windahl, 1993: 100)

In fact, Gerbner claims that the potency of television's cultivation effect is demonstrated by the over-portrayal of certain events (Gerbner et al, 1986). According to Gerbner, the content analyses conducted reveal that in American television programmes crimes are over-portrayed, that victims of violence on television too often belong to minority groups (e.g. women, Asians, Afro-Caribbeans), and that the most likely victimiser is a dominant white male. This is an unrealistic picture of American society (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, Morgan and Jackson-Beeck, 1979; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli, 1980) but is one that is sometimes superimposed onto peoples' views of the real world. If the cultural indicators questionnaire responses reveal a fear of crime that is disproportionate to the actuality of crime statistics, then this is considered evidence of cultivation which is represented by Gerbner's notion of the 'mean world syndrome':

"we have found that one lesson viewers derive from heavy exposure to the violence-saturated world of television is that in such a mean and dangerous world, most people 'cannot be trusted' and that most people are 'just looking out for themselves' [. . .] We have also found that the differential ratios of symbolic victimisation among women and minorities on television cultivate different levels of insecurity among their real-life counterparts, a 'hierarchy of fears' that confirms and tends to perpetuate their dependent status."

(Gerbner et al, 1986: 28)

This increased fear of crime is one example, according to Gerbner et al (1986), of the first order effects of exposure to television. First order effects comprise a change in

general beliefs about the everyday world, for example about the occurrence of violence in society; second order effects include a deeper significant change in specific attitudes, for instance about personal safety or law and order. In short, the key factor within the cultivation theory is the number of sources from which information can be gained and attitudes developed.

Another perspective within the discipline of mass communications which dates back the 1940s (e.g. Wolfe and Fiske, 1949; Berelson, 1949; Suchman, 1942; Herzog, 1940) is known as uses and gratifications research. The main objective of this research is to establish in what ways audience members use the media and to what ends. Due to this dual focus uses and gratifications has been considered as an umbrella term comprising several complex phenomena (Windahl, 1981; Blumler, 1979). However, the focus of this perspective and what it entails is effectively summarised by Rubin (1986):

"(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones."

(Rubin, 1986: 20)

The literature examining uses and gratifications research continually affirms the confused state in which it has progressed. Many different perspectives are referred to in this approach: explanations are given in psychological terms, sometimes with reference to sociological theory and the language of functionalism is frequently employed to theorise findings (Rosengren and Windahl, 1972). Throughout the uses and gratifications tradition there has been uncertainty concerning the nature of the internal states of the audience in relation to the media consumed, i.e. whether they are independent, dependent or intervening (Elliott, 1974). Generally speaking the trend has been to identify the patterns of gratifications and needs, treating them as independent variables, in order to explain media consumption (Katz et al, 1974). The notion of functionalism employed by uses and gratifications researchers is summarised by Elliott (1974):

“Individuals experience basic human needs that may be met through media use or by other patterns of behaviour.”

(Elliott, 1974: 250)

There are fundamental problems, however, in the adoption of the term, 'need,' in particular with the suggestion that the media offer gratification for basic human needs. It becomes a circular and complex process: does use lead to gratification of need, or does need lead to satisfaction through functional behaviour? Elliott (1974) refers to Maslow's (1964) hierarchy of needs to illustrate the complexity of investigating human needs:

“Needs are founded on the idea of deficit motivation, but as Maslow [. . .] has pointed out, this is only plausible when applied to basic or deficiency needs, cases where lack of satisfaction produces physiological consequences.”

(Elliott, 1974: 255)

These needs are compared to 'growth needs' that motivate healthy people toward self-actualisation (Maslow, 1964). Elliott (1974) therefore suggests that in studying the media it is growth needs that apply rather than the basic needs of human existence. The needs that are involved in media consumption are essentially a product of social experience:

“In that case media consumption should be explained as a part of a positive process of self-development taking place in a series of social situations.”

(Elliott, 1974: 255)

A similar argument considers the triviality of media gratifications which in relation to real tragedies of the human condition such as grief, deprivation and failure, are illusory and inadequate (Katz et al, 1974). The differences between the needs fulfilled by television and those fulfilled by a loving relationship, a career or a family may seem immense, but parallels can be drawn, even if the television version is rather diluted in comparison to reality. Experiencing pain or suffering through watching a tragic drama, for instance, may provide a channel through which such feelings can be confronted.

The possibility should not be rejected that the mass media may perform some profound existential function that is a worth while component of everyday living.

Uses and gratifications studies are many and varied. For example, some concentrate on the different motives for media use and compare them (e.g. Lichtenstein and Rosengfeld, 1983; Bantz, 1982; Elliott and Quattlebaum, 1979; Katz, Gurevitch and Haas, 1973). Others include the close examination of the social and psychological circumstances of media consumption (e.g. Rubin and Rubin, 1982; Lull, 1980; Adoni, 1979; Dimmick, McCain and Bolton, 1979; Korzenny and Neuendorf, 1980). More recently, however, uses and gratifications research has investigated the relationship between the gratifications sought by the audience and those obtained through media consumption (e.g. Wenner, 1982; Galloway and Meek, 1981; Palmgreen, Wenner and Rayburn, 1981, 1980). These studies have not only identified a number of gratifications that are satisfied but also have developed transactional, discrepancy, and expectancy-value models of media uses and gratifications.

An example of one such study is that of Krcmar and Greene (1999). This study investigates whether or not Zuckerman's (1994) construct of sensation-seeking is an active component in adolescents' viewing of violent television. The hypothesis tested was, in simple terms, that the those who are high sensation-seekers, i.e. those who are (a) thrill and adventure seeking, (b) experience seeking, (c) disinhibited, and/or (d) susceptible to boredom, will watch more violent television in order to gratify their needs. For this hypothesis to be tested adequately it was necessary for Krcmar and Greene (1999) to understand the relation between adolescent sensation-seeking, exposure to violent media, and subsequent risk-taking behaviour. If media use is compensatory, as uses and gratifications research has suggested, i.e. if it can act as a substitute for risk-taking behaviour, then the relation between sensation-seeking and exposure to media violence will be different from the relation between sensation-seeking and real risk-taking (Krcmar and Greene, 1999). The results revealed, however, that television violence does not compensate for exposure to real risk-taking:

"In fact, it is possible that sensation seekers, as a group, do not find television to be an exciting medium and are therefore among those who do not watch television, violent or otherwise."

(Krcmar and Greene, 1999: 41)

Hence, the conclusion drawn by Krcmar and Greene (1999) is that Zuckerman's (1994) construct of sensation-seeking requires further categorisation for it to be an adequate measure in uses and gratifications research. The four sub-scales within the group of high sensation seekers should be studied individually as they may relate to sensation seeking of different or even unrelated types. Additionally, Krcmar and Greene's (1999) findings reveal a further need to study specifically the compensatory function of television and other media in the context of non-mediated experiences.

Krcmar and Greene's (1999) study and others like it (e.g. Finn, 1997; Weaver, 1991; Donohew, Finn and Christ, 1988; Donahew, Palmgreen and Duncan, 1980) stress that the investigation of the media and their audiences is a complex process requiring conceptual elaboration at each stage of the research. The uses and gratifications perspective has been ambitious in its attempt to embrace each factor involved in media use and has made progress through the process of reflection. Unfortunately, however, in its attempt to be comprehensive, uses and gratifications research has become extremely muddled. Like its counterpart in psychology there has been an oversimplification and compartmentalisation of the factors involved. Also a large proportion of uses and gratifications research has been conducted in isolation, i.e. it has treated the audience as individuals set apart from their social and cultural environment. Little consideration is given to the other social processes that occur simultaneously with media consumption, for instance, the power relations between the audience and the institutionalised media producers. Although the research conducted within the uses and gratifications perspective has been both prolific and informative it still lacks a formal theory of the specific links between motives, attitudes, behaviour and communication effects (Rubin, 1986).

Perceptions of the Mass Media

Throughout the numerous perspectives applied to studying the media, and in particular the representations of violence in the visual media, there has been a consistent simplification of the concepts involved:

“Our reading of some of the academic work and newspaper reports has suggested that ‘violence on television’ is in danger of becoming a

portmanteau phrase, convenient for journalists, but in fact capable of the widest variety of meanings and applications.”

(British Broadcasting Corporation, 1979: 5)

The application of a mechanistic view of the media and its effects has meant that the majority of research projects have been message-centred and stimulus-response like in their treatment of the audience (Sander, 1997). The uses and gratifications perspective attempted to rectify the absence of a detailed investigation of the audience members in its investigation of mood-specific media consumption (Bryant and Zillmann, 1984), for example, yet has not encompassed the ways in which individuals interpret what they consume from the media.

Klapper's (1960) work on mass communications is essentially a discussion of empirical findings of that time. However, he also contributes his own evaluation of the abundant studies conducted:

“It is surely no wonder that a bewildered public should regard with cynicism a research tradition which supplies, instead of definitive answers, a plethora of relevant but inconclusive and at this time seemingly contradictory findings.”

(Klapper, 1960: 3)

It is with respect to the confusion of research projects and the complexity of issues involved that Klapper's writing is most notable. Klapper's (1960) book, *The Effects of Mass Communication*, precedes a substantial amount of research conducted within the perspectives of cultivation, uses and gratifications, and the effects model, nevertheless, his critique is pertinent to each of these. Klapper stresses the diversity of violent images in television programmes together with the varied ways in which different audience members will react to this display. These are issues that have featured throughout the present evaluation of the approaches toward media violence yet they have been consistently overlooked by their psychological counterparts. Klapper considers this oversight to be a severe one and throughout his book reminds the reader of what is not yet known and of what must be acknowledged in order to reach some kind of generalisable theory:

"It seems relatively clear [. . .] that the functions served by violent media fare are complex, and that the dynamic which results in the audience member's pursuing or avoiding delinquent behaviour is at least equally complex."

(Klapper, 1960: 162)

A later work of comparable significance to that of Klapper is Gunter's (1985) *Dimensions of Television Violence*. The focus of this later publication is the audience's perception of violence. As Gunter (1985) makes clear the first problem to be tackled is defining 'violence'. Yet establishing a comprehensive definition of violence is a problematic task:

"The problem of defining violence in itself reveals something fundamental about the nature of the concept. The fact that many different psychological and sociological definitions of violence and explanations of its occurrence have been formulated reflects not simply the complexity of the definitional problem, but perhaps more essentially that violence does not represent a unitary process or a single set of events or happenings with common antecedents or consequences."

(Gunter, 1985: 2)

Gunter (1985) identifies two broad definitional perspectives which are crucial in understanding perceptions of violence: (1) focusing on the behaviour of the perpetrator, and (2) examining the consequences of a violent act from the victim's point of view. This dichotomised view highlights the issues of justification that surround the interpretation of violence; usually violence is considered antisocial but the same act could be viewed as an act of self defence or bravery in different socially situated circumstances. Hence, the nature of the act itself, the nature of the person acting violently, the consequences facing the victim, and the nature of the victim, all play a part in the interpretation process. This means that the ways in which individuals perceive violence differ greatly. Within the context of media violence, this diversity has been neglected resulting in the use of the apparently universal phrase, 'television violence,' to refer to different stimuli that are assumed to be perceived in the same way.

The ramifications of this are immense. If the concept under investigation is not properly defined then the research project is doomed before it has begun. Nothing can be said of a phenomenon's effects if the phenomenon itself is not made meaningful in some way. This major conceptual oversight and the problems that result from it have been made apparent in the previous section about Psychological Research. In a review of the literature Gunter (1985) found that two perspectives dominate media violence research, programme-based and audience-based projects, and that both have serious limitations. He proposes that programme-based studies are rigid and limited in their approach because of the fixed, objective definitional framework adopted: whilst they give detailed accounts of content they miss what that content implies and what is actually perceived by the audience. Audience-based research, on the other hand, neglects the subjective nature of viewers' judgements about programmes: its attempt to determine classifications adopted by the audience fails because it does not examine the perceptions of particular portrayals or sequences involving violence. Gunter suggests that interpretations of violence on television may be as multi-faceted as those of violence in real life, especially considering that people are usually confronted by a far greater amount of violent forms via the media than they are in real life. Consequently, the complexity of the concept of violence calls for an in-depth analysis of both what is portrayed in the media and how the audience perceives it. Similarly, the audience should not be studied as a unitary body because individual differences profoundly influence the ways in which people interpret life events, including watching television. These proposals may seem straightforward. However, they have not been undertaken seriously in the previous studies of both mass communications and psychological research.

In his study, Gunter (1985) adopts several individual differences as mediators of viewers' responses to television violence: (1) self-perceptions, (2) social belief, (3) attitudes toward aggression, and (4) personality. He found many factors that influence the ways in which media violence is perceived by the audience, for instance, that the genre of the television programme is the most significant differentiating factor in perceptions of representations of violence. In line with previous research (Reeves, 1978; Noble, 1975; Howitt and Cumberbatch, 1974; Berkowitz and Alioto, 1973; Feshbach, 1972), Gunter found that more realistic portrayals of violence are considered to have more profound and lasting effects than fictional material. It has also been proposed that viewers prefer to watch violent programmes when they are faced

with personally threatening real life situations (Boyanowsky, 1977; Boyanowsky, Newton and Walster, 1974). The argument is that by being confronted with the same fears vicariously via the visual media, it is possible to learn how to cope with them in real life and perhaps even to reduce them.

Gunter also suggests that the impact of different physical forms of violence significantly influences peoples' perceptions. Four physical forms were used in Gunter's (1985) study: (1) shootings, (2) fist-fights, (3) explosions, and (4) stabbings. Shootings and stabbings were found to be considered as most violent and disturbing whatever their context, and cutting or stabbing in British crime dramas are perceived as more disturbing than shooting or cannon fire in Westerns. This indicates the great range that exists under the umbrella term, 'television violence.' The extent of visible harm was also found to influence the ways in which television violence is perceived. Any kind of observable harm is considered more disturbing than none, although non-fatal harm is found not to be as violent or disturbing as fatal harm:

"These perceived differences suggest that the amount of suffering endured by victims of violence, as well as the ultimate outcome is a crucial factor influencing judgements about violent television portrayals."

(Gunter, 1985: 250)

Again this illustrates the diversity with which violence can be portrayed. Moreover, it suggests that watching violence is not merely a passive experience but that a degree of empathy is felt by the viewer, not simply in terms of feeling compassion for another human being, but also in terms of the viewer's own personal experience.

A study conducted by Sander (1997) uses a similar system, devised by Galtung (1975), as a way of defining violence, perception differentiation. Galtung (1975) names the most distinctive dimensions of violence as: (1) structural (indirect) – personal (direct), (2) physical – psychological, (3) with-without an object, (4) manifest – latent, and (5) intention. Sander's (1997) study also takes into consideration a later scheme of the theoretical structure of aggression proposed by Groebel and Gleich (1993). This is a complex typology that aims to categorise television violence using seventeen different aspects of aggression that are based on five different levels, as follows: (1) concrete aggression, e.g. physical or verbal, against the self or others, direct or indirect,

instrumental or destructive; (2) argumentative reasons, e.g. reactive or goal-oriented, intentional/frustration based or unintended; (3) triggering causes, e.g. with or without physiological arousal, inside or outside an aggression-supporting environment; (4) legitimisation, e.g. being socially legitimised or not, punished or unpunished; and (5) consequences of aggressive act, e.g. harm causing or not, long-term or short-term effects, with effects of being noticeable or unnoticeable for the actor.

Sander (1997) compared his own findings with those of Groebel and Gleich (1993), Gunter (1985), and Früh (1995). Sander's (1997) study focused on the main determinants of the perceptions of violence in a television programme. Due to this, as he stated he expected, only two of the dimensions were found in all four studies, these were the social legitimisation of the violent act and harm done by the violent act. Sander proposes that harm is a key element in the perception of television violence and it usually is portrayed as intentional:

"The domination of the social legitimisation aspects points to the fact that violence is a social phenomenon and what is considered violence in a society depends on the dynamic social norms and rules within that society."

(Sander, 1997: 50).

Sander's argument therefore is that, due to the absence of a developed theoretical perspective, communications research has lacked a systematic and original approach. With the exceptions of Bryant and Zillmann (1991), who studied the emotional effects of television programmes, and Gunter's work on the perceptions of television violence (Gunter, 1985; Gunter and Furnham, 1984), there has in the past been little attempt to study media violence from a different perspective.

However, this situation is changing. A recent study conducted by Morrison, MacGregor, Svennevig and Firmstone (1999) represents a significant shift from the traditional theories which have pervaded the literature toward an open-minded exploration of viewers' interpretations of violent media fare. The findings of Morrison et al (1999) are presented in the text, *Defining Violence: The search for understanding*, and this title epitomises the central theme of the research:

"The task set was a difficult one. What we wanted to know was the subjective meaning of violence. How, in other words, did people classify some acts as violent and other acts, although ostensibly violent, as not really violent? Did people, furthermore, have a common definition of violence, or were there many different definitions? [. . .] The project was not concerned with taste - that is, whether the viewer enjoyed or disliked a particular scene of screen violence - but rather with how violence was determined or defined."

(Towler, 1999: vii)

Having set the boundaries of the investigation, Morrison et al (1999) were able to produce a lucid account of how different representations of violence are identified and defined by individuals. A number of varying texts were used, including *Pulp Fiction*, *Schindler's List*, actuality footage from news programmes, and *Tom and Jerry*. The kinds of violent events depicted in this material was categorised according to a typology of screen violence developed by Andrew Irving Associates (see Morrison et al, 1999: 4) which includes five kinds of response to violence and five kinds of violent representation. It is the categories of violent representation that were employed by Morrison et al (1999) in order to distinguish between the variety of violent images that are used by programme and film makers. These include violence which is perceived as (1) Fantasy/harmless, (2) Historical/educational, (3) Everyday family drama, (4) Real Life, and (5) Adult drama. The accounts collected from participants were then considered within the context of these different types of screen violence.

The findings revealed firstly that viewers distinguish between 'violence with a little v', 'violence with a big V' and 'violence with a massive V'. Morrison et al's (1999) notion of primary and secondary definers further illustrates what can be gleaned from these kinds of distinction. Primary definers, according to Morrison et al (1999) are drawn from real life, for example:

"The most prevalent general rule seems to be that behaviour which is judged to be appropriate, fair and justified - even when overtly violent - is not usually seen to be seriously or 'really' violent. [. . .] It was considered by all our respondents that to act violently you had to break a code of conduct

governing physical exchange, and the code was always based on fairness or justice."

(Morrison et al 1999: 6)

The secondary definers adopted by participants in this study are concerned with the aspects of a scene which give it "a greater sense of violence" (Morrison et al, 1999: 7). If the violence appears to be 'real', i.e. if there is a lot of blood and the camera zooms in on the injuries that have been inflicted, then the scene is considered to involve a greater degree of violence than if these attributes are lacking. The significance of this finding is that the identification of an act as violent is determined by individuals' external constructs of violence or, in other words, what is deemed violent by contemporary culture, while the level of violence is assessed according to previous experiences of the conventions used in violent television and film (Morrison et al, 1999).

After presenting numerous examples from men who are accustomed to violence in their everyday lives, women who are afraid of violence, policemen and war veterans, for instance, Morrison et al (1999) conclude by offering a working definition of violence:

"Screen violence is any act that is seen or unequivocally signalled which would be considered an act of violence in real life, because the violence was considered unjustified either in the degree or nature of the force used, or that the injured party was undeserving of the violence. The degree of violence is defined by how realistic the violence is considered to be, and made even stronger if the violence inflicted is considered unfair."

(Morrison et al, 1999: 133)

In short, this study is a welcome contribution to the field of media violence research because it focuses upon the most fundamental question, i.e. how is violence defined, and attempts to answer it in a comprehensive and straightforward manner. Researchers like Morrison and his colleagues who have acknowledged the heterogeneity of both the nature of media violence and the ways in which viewers perceive that violence, have taken a vital step forward in unravelling the complexities of media violence. These are issues which have been ignored by researchers in the past at great loss. However, the significance of this work on the perceptions of violence by those such as Klapper (1960), Gunter (1985), Sander (1997) and Morrison et al (1999)

is beginning to be heeded, especially in the body of contemporary research that is known as audience research.

Audience Research

The inquiries into media violence of more recent years are predominantly associated with the mass communications discipline rather than with psychology. It has been proposed that this is due to a resistance within psychology to reject the effects model (Gauntlett, 1995). Mass communications researchers, on the other hand, appear to be more willing to react against this tradition with novel ideas of how to investigate this complex issue (e.g. Barker and Brooks, 1998; Goldstein, 1998; Buckingham, 1996; Zillmann and Bryant, 1994). One example of this shift in mass communications research is illustrated by the frustration expressed in reaction to the argument that is continually presented by the press, usually after some horrific crime that seems devoid of explanation, that a particular film, or film viewing in general, is to blame for the criminal's behaviour:

“On the morning of Wednesday, 13 March 1996, Thomas Hamilton, a middle-aged man with no criminal record, walked into the primary school in the small Scottish town of Dunblane, shot sixteen children and a teacher and then killed himself. It was a deeply disturbing incident and, although there was no evidence that he had a particular interest in watching screen violence, it prompted a rash of commentary condemning the morality of popular film and television.”

(Murdock, 1997: 67)

A similar case is that of Michael Ryan, who shot 16 people in the small town of Hungerford in 1987, where *Rambo: First Blood Part Two* was mentioned as a stimulus to his murderous behaviour. Also Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, who were ten years old when they abducted and killed James Bulger in Liverpool in 1993, were said to have watched *Child's Play 3* for their inspiration. There was no evidence found supporting this claim, yet, as Barker clearly states:

“Did this failure produce retractions of the claim? Did any of the newspapers, or Alton, or the other campaigners, admit they had been

wrong? Not one. So urgent is the will to find such a link, it seems, that when an exemplar like this falls apart the response is simply to carry on."

(Barker, 1997: 13)

In this text, *Moving Images: Understanding children's emotional responses to television*, Buckingham (1996) offers an in-depth investigation of both children's and parents' conceptions of the James Bulger murder. He discusses the role played by what he terms "popular mythology" (Buckingham, 1996: 60) in the decisions made about children's television:

"It is this mythology, perhaps to a greater extent than the more equivocal evidence provided by academic research, that informs the dominant discourses about media effects, and hence the dominant arguments for regulating and intervening in children's viewing."

(Buckingham, 1996: 60)

There have also been criticisms of the philosophical grounding of effects research, together with a dissatisfaction with the methods employed, from mass communications researchers. Many press articles that circulate fears about the effects of media violence refer to "more than 1,000 studies carried out in the United States and elsewhere, demonstrating a link between screen violence and aggressive behaviour in children" (Phillips, 1994: 25). In response to this kind of assertion, Murdock (1997) stresses the implications of relating empirical research to the common sense notion that media violence must be harmful:

"this circular relationship between empiricist science and common-sense thinking was built into academic work on media 'effects' from the outset. The dominant research tradition adopted the definition of the 'problem' already established in popular and political commentary. The result was banal science, which failed to ask awkward questions, to pursue other possible lines of inquiry or to place 'effects' in their social contexts. But because its investigative procedures corresponded to common-sense notions of what 'proper' science was – the image of controlled experimentation being particularly central – its 'findings' seemed to offer strong confirmation of popular assumptions and anxieties. These, in turn,

were anchored in a deep-rooted formation of fear about the precarious balance between anarchy and order in the modern age.”

(Murdock, 1997: 69-70)

Barker and Brooks (1998) describe the repercussions of such attitudes when attempting to gain funding for research which goes against the grain in its rejection of the effects hypothesis. Similar criticisms have been expressed by Gauntlett (1995). In his review of media violence research Gauntlett attributes many of its problems to the dominance of the natural scientific attitude and the over-simplification of the effects research which has been a consequence of this approach (Gauntlett, 1995). Gauntlett (1998) furthers this argument in his text, *Ten things wrong with the 'effects model'*. Gauntlett suggests that the inconsistency of the many studies conducted over the years in both psychological and mass communications research, leads to one of two conclusions; first, that the lack of evidence of a link between media violence and violent behaviour simply means that there is no link, second, “that the media effects research has quite consistently taken the *wrong approach* to the mass media, its audiences, and society in general” (Gauntlett, 1998: 2). His first criticism is that the effects model takes a social problem, violence, and attempts to explain it through the media rather than beginning with that problem and explaining it with reference to those involved in it, therefore it approaches the problem backwards. The fact that any acknowledgement of the social world within which the media exists is lacking in the effects model represents a fundamental limitation of this approach. Another concern expressed by Gauntlett is that the effects approach does not adequately define its objects of study; the phenomenon of media violence is a complex one, yet effects studies have taken for granted the definitions of media output such as ‘anti-social’ and ‘pro-social’ programmes. Perhaps most crucial, in terms of the applicability of effects research, the researchers themselves claim superiority over the mass population as there is no concern that they themselves will become anti-social, violent members of the community:

“Surveys typically show that whilst a certain proportion of the public feel that the media may cause other people to engage in antisocial behaviour, almost no-one ever says that they have been affected in that way themselves. This view is taken to extremes by researchers and campaigners whose work brings them into regular contact with the

supposedly corrupting material, but who are unconcerned for their own well-being as they implicitly 'know' that the effects will only be on 'other people'."

(Gauntlett, 1998: 7)

Another fundamental flaw in the effects model, as has been outlined previously, is that it assumes 'media violence' is a single entity that will be received and interpreted in the same way by everyone who comes into contact with it (Gauntlett, 1998, 1995). Further, rather than accepting that viewers of violent media are "reflexive individuals" (Gauntlett, 1995: 10) who are capable of making their own conclusions about what is portrayed in the visual media, they have been treated as passive and ignorant:

"researchers have often implicitly insulted and patronised the audience, who appear in their texts as passive, ignorant and undiscerning sponges, absorbing the televisual spectacle with little thought or understanding, and even less a critical or ironic eye."

(Gauntlett, 1995: 10)

It is in response to these limitations of the effects model that mass communications researchers have begun to investigate the phenomenon of media violence in a more holistic manner. Instead of ignoring the complexities of the issues involved, close attention is paid to the idiosyncrasies of those who consume what is produced as well as to the variety of ways in which violence is portrayed (e.g. Barker and Brooks, 1998; Schlesinger, Haynes, Boyle, McNair, Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Schlesinger, Dobash, Dobash and Weaver, 1992; Hill, 1997). This has involved the introduction of a different set of methodologies such as interviewing and focus groups. This approach enables the in-depth investigation of viewers' responses to, ideas about, and attitudes toward, violence in the media; rather than making ill-founded assumptions about the audience's perceptions of media violence or their subsequent behaviour, this research asks directly what it is they experience through viewing violence.

Barker and Brooks' (1998) research investigates the film, *Judge Dredd*, its main character, played by Sylvester Stallone, its audiences, and how individuals negotiate the meanings of the film. From the outset, Barker and Brooks (1998) consciously reject the traditional premise attributed to mass communications research, i.e. "pessimistic

films = pessimistic audiences. Just as, violent media = violent audiences. And so on." (Barker and Brooks, 1998: 7). Several groups of people were interviewed by Barker and Brooks (1998), either in groups or individually, including teenaged boys from a youth club, adult fans of the *Judge Dredd* comics, and cinema-goers who were approached when leaving the cinema. A number of themes were evident across these groups. Individuals' expectations about the film, in which cinema complex Judge Dredd was watched, and whether it was viewed at the cinema or on video each played a role in participants' responses (Barker and Brooks, 1998). In addition, Barker and Brooks (1998) observed that in their discussions about Judge Dredd, participants would refer to the existing conceptions and arguments concerning media violence that are present in contemporary culture:

"One of the central features of contemporary British film culture is its embattled state. A month does not pass without someone belabouring as dangerous what millions would happily enjoy. [. . .] One of the things we encountered regularly was the effects of those 'disciplinary discourses'. In this, there are few if any differences among viewers. A very large number of people are aware of being judged, if they declare their liking for certain kinds of films. This leads to paradoxical self-condemnations as self-celebrations."

(Barker and Brooks, 1998: 68)

Hence, watching a film is not simply a process of soaking up images and making sense of a story, it is a multi-faceted event which has both internal and external consequences. This incredibly detailed research project is commendable in its commitment to get to the bottom of what violent film means to its audiences. Rather than making assumptions about the role of cinema-going in the everyday lives of individuals, Barker and Brooks (1998) have added considerably to existing knowledge by asking people to talk about their experiences almost without an agenda. The agenda was simply to discover the significance of *Judge Dredd* to its viewers. It is this kind of open-minded research that is urgently required if the enigma of film violence is to be understood.

Barker and Brooks (1998) are not alone, however. Several previous projects have delved into the discourse of film viewers in order discover what screen violence means

to them. Schlesinger et al (1992) studied women's responses to violent programmes that have been transmitted on British terrestrial television:

"Indeed, we have chosen to pose the question differently and instead to ask: what women *make* of the violence they see in the media? The underlying aim is to try to probe what representations of violence against women *mean* in their lives."

(Schlesinger et al, 1992: 3)

Different genres of programmes were chosen in order to evaluate the differential responses of the female audience. These were: *Crimewatch UK*, an episode of the soap opera, *EastEnders* involving domestic violence, *Closing Ranks* which is a television drama, and *The Accused* a feature length Hollywood film. The women participating made up a representative sample including Scottish and English, Asian, Afro-Caribbean, white, working class and middle class women. A further dimension was added to this study through a comparison between the interpretations of women who had personal experience of violence in real life and those who had not. The difference this makes is illustrated in the women's accounts of *The Accused*: those who have no experience of violence in their own lives described this film as "realistic", "believable", "violent", and "disturbing" whilst those with experiences of violence simply reported it to be "not at all exciting" and "not entertaining" (Schlesinger et al, 1992). The general response to this film was shock, distress and even repulsion, yet these women maintained that the violence depicted in *The Accused*, which includes the gang rape of a woman (played by Jodie Foster), was relevant to real life situations and therefore a justifiable portrayal of violence. The variety of ways in which individuals react to representations of violence is highlighted in this study:

"Viewing televised violence may, for some women, involve the recreation of a painful and dangerous experience; for others, it approximates a feared event; and for others still, it is merely the depiction of a relatively abstract and distant act. Differentiated by life experiences, social class and ethnicity, viewers interpret sexual and domestic violence, given scenes and characters, as well as entire programmes, in a variety of ways. Some issues are more salient for particular categories of viewers than for others. Thus the viewing group or audience cannot be treated as a single entity

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but, rather, manifests a patterned diversity. Accordingly, the viewing audience becomes several viewing audiences.”

(Schlesinger et al, 1992: 164)

This is a significant step forward in mass communications research because rather than being driven by fixed assumptions about how audiences respond to representations of violence in the media, researchers are beginning to value the stories that viewers tell about their experiences of violence via the visual media.

Schlesinger, Haynes, Boyle, McNair, Dobash and Dobash (1998) conducted a second study about men's responses to television violence in order to ascertain whether or not their responses are different from their female counterparts. This study was designed so that it could be easily compared to the previous study of women's interpretations. The television programmes used were *Basic Instinct* and *Under Siege*, both of which are feature length films, an episode of *Eastenders*, *When the Fighting Starts* which is a documentary including CCTV footage of fights in city centres at the weekend, *Trip Trap* which is a television drama, a piece of news film depicting an incident at a football match (when then Manchester United player, Cantona, kicked a supporter), and the broadcasting of two boxing matches. There is a rape scene in *Basic Instinct* and the men's responses to this revealed that, although they do not condone rape, it is more likely that men will relate more to the male protagonist than to the female victim (Schlesinger et al, 1998). *Under Siege*, an action film, did not hold any surprises for the male respondents. They dismissed it as formulaic and portraying comic book violence rather than a serious representation of real world violence; their accounts reveal that a preferable form of violence is the 'new brutalism' found in the films of Tarantino, for example. In short, the men were shown to rationalise the violence that is portrayed in soap operas and in television dramas, stating that the issue of violence cannot be ignored by the media. The conclusions drawn were that the male audience is more able to detach themselves from violence that is portrayed on television than their female counterparts (Schlesinger et al, 1998).

A similar study was conducted by Hill (1997), below is a summary of its focus:

“The question I want to ask is: why do people wish to see violent movies? It is only once we discover why watching violent movies is a popular leisure

activity that we can begin to understand the complex emotional responses to viewing violence. Consequently, rather than focusing on the movies themselves, and debating what the body count is in *Natural Born Killers* [. . .] it seems logical to talk to the consumers of violent movies and see what they have to say about screen violence.”

(Hill, 1997: 1-2)

Hill conducted a series of focus groups in which respondents were shown clips from films, such as the ear amputation scene in *Reservoir Dogs* and the eye stabbing scene in *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. This research project reveals several factors that are essential to the study of viewers' responses to film violence: audience awareness, the significance of context, gender awareness, and the role of anticipation. Hill (1997) found that viewers are aware of audience responses to violent scenes and will monitor their own responses in relation to others around them. Additionally, viewers are alert to the role that media hype plays in the audience awareness of particular films and their success. According to Hill, the context in which violence is portrayed is significant in the response that will ensue. Audiences are knowledgeable about genres and come to expect different forms of violence in a horror film than in a crime drama, for example. Equally important is the contextual information of the viewers themselves, for instance age, social class, or education may influence the ways in which individuals view violence. As in the studies by Schlesinger and colleagues (Schlesinger et al, 1992; Schlesinger et al, 1998), Hill stresses the importance of gender in investigating responses to media violence. More intriguing, however, is her notion of anticipation. It is revealed that when viewing a violent film, people tend to expect the worst and prepare themselves for a shock, often referring to previous experiences of similar films or to friends' reports of the film and the media coverage that the film has received. On top of these factors, the film will no doubt use some kind of building technique when approaching a violent scene, such as the music in *Reservoir Dogs*. Hill makes the point that this anticipation is sometimes at work even before the film has been released. The soundtrack from *Reservoir Dogs* was publicised and well known by audiences before the film was released in Britain. In addition to this, the ear amputation scene in *Reservoir Dogs* had received a kind of cult status among movie goers. The implications of this are that viewers are made so aware of what is to come in the film that the whole process of watching it becomes a test of the viewer's will. This notion of boundary testing is emphasised in Hill's (1997) work as a crucial component in the process of

viewing violence. It is best exemplified by repeated viewing when the viewers compares their present response to their previous one(s), in order to discover whether or not they can now cope with the same scene better.

In short, through embarking on studies with limited predetermined assumptions about the nature of media violence and the assumed responses to it, and through the adoption of new methodological tools, such as interviews and focus groups, mass communications researchers have opened the door to a more open-ended style of research. This is an encouraging move forward that has been long overdue in both the disciplines of mass communications and psychology.

Summary of Mass Communications Research

As stated above, much of the early mass communications research about media violence tended to follow the same path as the psychological studies outlined. Although the perspective within mass communications research began as a response to the simplistic stimulus-response approach of the effects model, with the aim of investigating both the media and the audience more comprehensively, they too have been restricted by methodology. The content analyses of Gerbner's cultivation project are both valuable and necessary but they only answer one question, how much violence is being portrayed in the media (Gunter, 1985). The uses and gratifications perspective aimed to determine different types of audience motivation as well as identifying the satisfaction gained through the consumption of mass media output, but in many ways was hindered by its over ambitiousness (Elliott, 1974).

More recently researchers have begun to acknowledge the complexity of the concepts involved in the study of media violence (e.g. Sander, 1997; Groebel and Gleich, 1993; Gunter, 1985; Galtung, 1975); both the representations of violence that are portrayed in the media and the audiences that receive them are not unitary factors but constitute fluid and diverse entities. This has now been acknowledged by mass communications researchers leading to better informed, open projects such as audience research (e.g. Barker and Brooks, 1998; Schlesinger et al, 1998; Hill, 1997; Schlesinger et al, 1992). These studies represent the most fundamental development within the discipline thus far. In the first instance they are not concerned with supporting or refuting preconceived assumptions about the nature of media violence and its effects on the audience. They do not oversimplify the concept of media violence, but attempt to determine what the

different elements of screen violence mean to viewers; the process of asking the viewers themselves what are their concerns, opinions, and responses to violence in the media is a significant methodological advancement. However, as Hill (1997) clearly states, this is only the first step.

For decades research about media violence has been extremely controversial in both the scientific community and in the public consciousness, but at the same time it has been fundamentally flawed in its approach (Barker and Brooks, 1998; Buckingham, 1996; Gauntlett, 1995). This has resulted in very powerful, yet misguided, public and academic discourses promoting and sustaining the belief that violence in the visual media is harmful to its audience and therefore should be eradicated. At last research is taking a more informed and more open path. What is still lacking, however, is a comprehensive psychological theory that can explain the function of viewing representations of violence vicariously via popular culture.

2.4 The Psychology of Violence and Aggression

The empirical research recounted in the previous two sections provides an essential service to the furthering of knowledge about media violence, equally as vital are the advancements which have been made in terms of psychological theory. This section will discuss the diversity of theoretical thinking which has emerged concerning the phenomenon of human violence. These are particularly relevant to this project because of their presence within public thinking. The majority of individuals in contemporary culture are aware of the kinds of arguments proffered by psychologists and as such they are essential to the ways in which viewers of violent film make sense of their experiences.

The first issue raised will be that of defining 'violence', which, as has been suggested, is a complex task for psychology. The remainder of this section will deal with a number of theoretical positions which have developed various ways of understanding violence. This discussion is not exhaustive, however, there are many positions which have been excluded so as not to detract from the context of this project as an investigation of violence that is experienced vicariously. For instance, the neurophysiology of aggression is not included nor is the significance of personality traits in terms of understanding violent and aggressive behaviour.

Firstly, the traditional theories of instinctivism and behaviourism, together with a number of theories which have been influenced by them such as the social learning theory and the frustration-aggression hypothesis, will be discussed. An evaluation of Freud's psychoanalytic approach to violence makes up the next section and finally an account of the humanistic-existential theories of violence and aggression will be offered. This latter theoretical position has often been forgotten by modern psychological theory but is considered crucial to the understanding of violence which is, after all, a human phenomenon.

Definitions of Violence

As introduced in the previous section, defining 'media violence' and an 'aggressive response' are complex tasks. The same is true for the concept of 'real life violence' and 'aggression'; often in theoretical accounts of violent behaviour, the topic of discussion becomes, not violence per se, but aggression. Aggression is often conceptualised as the emotion which pre-empts violent behaviour. May (1972) presents a useful maxim by which the relationship between violence and aggression may be understood:

"Aggression and violence are rightly linked in the public mind – one speaks of aggression *and* violence. Aggression is to violence [. .] as anxiety is to panic."

(May, 1972: 182-183)

However, the differences between aggression and violence are equally significant:

"When aggression builds up in us, at a certain point, as though a switch has been thrown, and we become violent. The aggression is object-related – that is, we know at whom and what we are angry. But in violence, the object-relation disintegrates, and we swing wildly, hitting whoever is within range."

(May, 1972: 183)

This distinction, expressed through the object-relatedness of behaviour, is one which recurs, although in different guises, throughout attempts to define violence and aggression. Aronson (1995) reveals the complexity of the concept of 'aggression' by declaring that it can comprise anything from assertiveness to murder. This ambiguity,

however, can be broken down by identifying distinct levels of aggression. According to Aronson, intentional aggression, i.e. that which intentionally causes injury or harm, must be contrasted with accidental or incidental aggression. Further, aggression exerted in order to attain some goal must be separated theoretically from that which is an end in itself; the former would be instrumental aggression, the latter, hostile aggression (Aronson, 1995).

As in many other areas within the psychology of violence, there is much disagreement concerning the meaning of violence. One kind of definition which is often employed is illustrated by that of Baron and Byrne:

“Aggressive behaviour directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment.”

(Baron and Byrne, 1994: 478)

This definition is extremely limiting, excluding both instrumental and incidental aggression. In an attempt to overcome this lack of consensus, psychologists have attempted to identify the roots of aggressive behaviour and its outcome, which is violence. However, this has resulted in further disagreement. Different schools of thought propose *contrasting theories concerning the origin, and in some cases the prevention, of violence*. Instinctivists profess that an aggressive drive exists which is innate within humankind. This is contrasted with behaviourist thought in which aggression is believed to be a learned response as a result of reinforced behaviour. These two perspectives represent in many ways the fundamental argument, i.e. does aggression originate from within the individual or is it a factor of society which determines the behaviour of individuals? This dichotomy is reproduced in different forms several times in the following discussion and is one which tracks the development of psychology throughout its history.

Instinctivism

Darwin's (1946) theory of evolution is imperative in understanding the concept of aggression as an innate factor of humanity. It is argued that due to the ancestral heritage of the human species, in the stages of early development “we either attacked or starved” (Ardrey, 1976: 337). Through this self-preservation the human race evolved:

"individuals have been shaped by natural selection to display or refrain from aggression in accordance with how it affects their own survival and reproduction and/or that of their close relatives."

(Hinde, 1987:17-18)

The theory of evolution influenced the forefathers of psychology, such as William James (1890) and William McDougall (1913, 1932) who believed that aggressive behaviour was the result of a propensity or a craving toward violence initiating from our primate origin. This became known as the instinct theory, or instinctivism. In the beginning this aggressive instinct was not considered to be mechanistic but a result of evolution, of learning (James, 1890), and of different cultural influences (McDougall, 1913, 1932). However, this understanding was soon replaced by the mechanistic-hydraulic hypothesis which suggests that there is a constant build-up of energy within individuals that must eventually be released in the form of aggression (Hinde, 1960). Lorenz's (1966) argument supports this hypothesis, he uses the metaphor of water; energy is pumped into a container that then must be discharged by a *spring valve at the bottom*. Freud's libido theory (1908) is a similar example, this time it is sexual tension that is said to rise, resulting in displeasure until the tension is released through action.

Throughout his career, Freud continually updated and revised his theories; Thanatos, or the death instinct, was developed by Freud (1923) as counter to the instinct toward life, Eros. Whilst Eros is a life-supporting drive, Thanatos is a destructive drive which, in order to avoid otherwise inevitable self-destruction, directs itself outward in the form of aggressive behaviour with the aim of reducing "organic life back into the inanimate state" (Freud, 1923: 380).

In this sense aggression is not a response to a stimulus but is a constantly flowing impulse that is rooted in the very constitution of the human organism. Of fundamental importance to this argument is the belief that human beings, in their natural state, are brutes whose aggression can only be sublimated through the enforcement of law and order (Aronson, 1995). Equally crucial is the proposal that the instincts found to direct human behaviour are also present in other animal species. There is a limited amount of empirical evidence to suggest that instincts exist, nevertheless there is a substantial body of work available which is based on experimentation on animals.

An ethologist, Lorenz (1966), has advocated the theory of the fighting instinct through his observation of the behaviour of cichlids, a highly aggressive tropical fish. In their natural environment, male cichlids will attack other males as a demonstration of territorial aggression, however, this aggression is never exerted either on the female cichlid or other species. However, in an observatory aquarium if all but one male cichlid are removed then the male remaining will begin to attack males of other species, further if all males are removed then this male cichlid will attack and kill the females of his own and other species. This leads Lorenz (1966) to the conclusion that aggression is "an essential part of the life-preserving organisation of instincts" (cited in Aronson, 1995: 255). Other evidence shows that rats raised in isolation will attack a fellow rat that is introduced into their cage (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1963). Moreover, the isolated rats will adopt the same patterns of threat and attack that experienced rats use, demonstrating that aggression is not simply a learned behaviour. This, however, is not evidence of instinctive aggression because it was stimulated from an external force, i.e. another rat. To conclude that aggression is an innate propensity there must be physiological evidence of an internal spontaneous stimulation toward fighting that is not dependent on external factors (Scott, 1958). More doubt is cast on the theory of instinctivism from similar experiments which have shown that animals do not always react aggressively. Kuo (1961) raised a kitten with a rat and observed that the cat did not attack the rat and neither did it fight other rats once introduced into the cage. *This suggests that early experiences may inhibit aggressive behaviour, something which would not occur if aggression was an uncontrollable instinct.*

Instinctivist theory, in short, proposes that both in humans and in other animals there is an innate aggressive drive whose expression is uncontrollable and inevitable. Is it correct, however, to categorise humans in the same way as other lower animals? Storr forcefully articulates this concern:

"We generally describe the most repulsive examples of man's cruelty as brutal or bestial, implying by these adjectives that such behaviour is characteristic of less highly developed animals than ourselves. In truth, however, the extremes of 'brutal' behaviour are confined to man; and there is no parallel in nature to our savage treatment of each other. The sombre fact is that we are the cruellest and most ruthless species that has ever walked the earth; and that although we may recoil in horror when we read

in the newspaper or history book of the atrocities committed by man upon man, we know in our hearts that each one of us harbours within himself those same savage impulses which lead to murder, to torture and to war."

(Storr, 1968: ix)

The differences between humans and other animals in relation to instinct theory may be best illustrated via a comparison between the theories of Freud (1923) and Lorenz (1966). This is considered a useful process as instinctivism is often rejected due to its reliance on references to the animal kingdom. The theories share in common the notion of the mechanistic-hydraulic nature of aggression although the origin is considered to be different, i.e. Freud advocates the libido theory whereas Lorenz states that it is evolutionary development from which this instinct derives. However, the two theorists' positions contrast greatly in the nature of this drive; Freud's death instinct is a destructive drive, but Lorenz's is a drive which serves self-preservation. This difference loses its significance, however, through Lorenz's account of the vicissitudes of an originally defensive and life-serving aggression (Fromm, 1973). Lorenz (1966) proposes that defensive aggression is transformed in humans to a spontaneously flowing drive that will be expressed aggressively whether or not a sufficient stimulus is present; when no proper stimulus can be found, the aggressive drive will create a stimulus so that it can be satisfied through an explosion of tension. The conclusion which Lorenz advocates is that man is driven by a force to destroy. Both Freud and Lorenz believe that the failure to express aggression in action is unhealthy in terms of psychological well-being:

"Both [Freud and Lorenz], by different routes, arrive at a picture of man in which aggressive-destructive energy is continually produced, and very difficult, if not impossible in the long run, to control. The so-called evil in animals becomes a real evil in man, even though according to Lorenz its roots are not evil."

(Fromm, 1973: 46)

Lorenz's observations of interpersonal behaviour amongst different species suggest to him that only those animals with highly developed intra-specific aggression are capable of a personal bond that would signify friendship. From these observations, Lorenz (1966) concludes that "there is no love without aggression" (cited in Fromm, 1973: 51).

This statement, as stressed by Fromm (1973) could be valid for the animal kingdom but to assume that it is true for humankind is ill-founded. Lorenz argues that "one can really hate only where one has loved and, even if one denies it, still does" (cited in Fromm, 1973: 51). Fromm stresses that this is oversimplistic when applied to human beings:

"That love is sometimes transformed into hate has often been said, even though it is more correct to say that it is not love which suffers this transformation, but the wounded narcissism of the loving person, that is to say, the non-love which causes hate. To claim one hates only where one has loved, however, turns the element of truth in the statement into plain absurdity. Does the oppressed hate the oppressor, does the mother of the child hate its murderer, does the tortured hate the torturer because they once loved him or still do?"

(Fromm, 1973: 51-52)

The point is that Lorenz is the observer of animal behaviour and his method involves drawing analogies from their behaviour to that of humans. Through these comparisons Lorenz assumes that, because the behaviours are the same, so are the causes. Freud, on the other hand, developed his theories through the constant observation of humans. There is a fundamental difference between the animal kingdom and humankind; to be "selfless", "cruel", and "embarrassed", words which Lorenz (1966) has used to describe animals, it is necessary to be self aware, to have an ego and to be aware of the physiological structure on which that ego rests (Fromm, 1973). Is it possible to empirically illustrate that animals have an ego?

This notion of self-awareness can be expressed in the phrase 'to know thyself', something which both Freud and Lorenz profess. However, Lorenz's notion of what 'to know thyself' means is a theoretical knowledge of the facts of evolution; 'to know thyself' in Freudian theory is a rather more complex process that is not simply intellectual but also affective, it is the process whereby what is unconscious becomes conscious. It may take a sick person wishing to be cured years to know him/herself, or a life time for someone who simply wishes to be his/her true self.

The differences between Lorenz's (1966) and Freud's (1923) theories are vast. The former can be summed up as a theory based on analogies drawn from lower

evolutionary species with lesser developed neurophysiological organisation and a less complex set of behavioural patterns; the latter is a theory based on direct observation of human behaviours that is postulated with caution and which takes into account the intricacy of the human mind. Having said that, both are instinctivist theories (Freud's later developments of his theory of aggression are included in the later section about psychoanalysis). In his evaluation of the work of Lorenz and of Freud, Fromm (1973) is extremely critical of Lorenz, nevertheless his criticism is valid in terms of assessing the philosophical grounding of instinctivism (this will be discussed in more detail in the following Critique of Instinctivism and Behaviourism):

“The social and moral Darwinism preached by Lorenz is a romantic, nationalistic paganism that tends to obscure the true understanding of the biological, psychological, and social factors responsible for human aggression. Here lies Lorenz's fundamental difference from Freud, in spite of the similarities in their views on aggression Freud was one of the last representatives of Enlightenment philosophy. He genuinely believed in reason as the one strength man has and which alone could save him from confusion and decay. He genuinely postulated the need for self-knowledge by the uncovering of man's unconscious strivings. He overcame the loss of God by turning to reason – and felt painfully weak. But he did not turn to new idols.”

(Fromm, 1973: 61)

In short, it is the use of different methodologies and the divergent beliefs concerning the sources of aggression, which set Freud apart from Lorenz, and which reveal the inadequacies of comparing humankind's conduct to that observed in other animals. The theory of instinctivism cannot be avoided in considering of the roots of aggression because of its dominance in psychology. Equally, the theory that violence is caused by an innate drive, rather than factors within the external environment, has serious implications for the study of media violence. If violence can be attributed to an instinct then it casts doubt over the possibility that exposure to media violence will increase aggressive behaviour. However, the limitations of instinctivism's automatic assumption that human aggression can be understood on the basis of observing animals is shown to be ill-founded in Fromm's (1973) comparison between Lorenz and Freud, two leading instinctivist theorists.

Behaviourism

At the opposite end of the scale to instinctivism is behaviourism. Behaviourist philosophers, such as Rousseau (1762) propose that man is born essentially good, benign and happy and it is the external pressures of the environment and a restrictive society which force depravity on him. Watson (1914) defined behaviourist psychology as the study of the behaviour or activities of the human being that are observable. Skinner later developed Watson's notion of behaviourism, renaming it the science of psychology, that is, the science of the engineering of behaviour, whose aim it is to determine the correct reinforcements that will produce the desired behaviour. Within this science of psychology, Skinner (1971, 1961) proposed the theory of operant conditioning: that if an unconditioned behaviour is rewarded then it is reinforced as an acceptable form of behaviour; if on the other hand the unconditioned behaviour is punished then the subject learns that it is unacceptable. Therefore, according to Skinner, with the correct use of reward reinforcement, animal and human behaviour patterns can be altered even to the extent that supposed 'innate' tendencies will be overthrown. Skinner's (1971, 1961) conclusion was that apart from genetic endowment, human behaviour is determined by two kinds of reinforcement: (1) through normal cultural processes, and (2) through planning in accordance with Skinner's operant conditioning.

Buss (1961) also stresses the importance of reinforcement to the concept of aggression. He proposes that aggression is learnt as a behaviour that can be adopted to achieve one's optimal advantage, i.e. man acts, feels and thinks in a way that will facilitate his goal. However, behaviourist philosophy does not attribute the notion of intent to aggressive behaviour. As introduced above, in behaviourism human behaviour is considered to be influenced only by external stimuli. Aggression, then, according to Buss is "a response that delivers noxious stimuli to another organism":

"There are two reasons for excluding the concept of intent from the definition of aggression. First, it implies teleology, a purposive act directed towards a future goal [. . .] Second, and more important, is the difficulty of applying this term to behavioural events. Intent is a private event that may or may not be capable of verbalisation, may or may not be accurately reflected in a verbal statement. One might be led to accept intent as an inference from the reinforcement history of the organism [. . .] In summary,

intent is both awkward and unnecessary in the analysis of aggressive behaviour; rather, the crucial issue is the nature of the reinforcing consequences that affect the occurrence and the strength of aggressive responses. In other words, what are the classes of reinforcers that affect aggressive behaviour?"

(Buss, 1961, cited in Fromm, 1973: 74)

The following two sections will discuss some different reinforcers or determinants of aggressive behaviour that have been identified in psychological theory, however, at present it is necessary to consider the methodology applied in the behaviourist approach to aggression. As stated above, Watson (1914) identified observable behaviour as the subject matter of psychology. This may be associated with the dominance of the natural sciences and psychology's aim to be accepted among them. The philosophy of the natural sciences required that data must be analysed objectively in order for findings to be considered valid, thereby excluding all forms of subjectivity from psychological investigations. In turn this meant that aggression could only be explained in terms of observable, mechanistic behavioural patterns. Buss's (1961) statement about intent now becomes more significant; intent is an internal, unobservable event which renders it invalid in behaviourist inquiry because there is no method available by which it could be included. In short, the behaviourist tradition of psychology promotes the view that aggression and violence are attributable to external forces which are out of the individual's control. *Additionally, behaviourists argue that aggressive behaviour may be reduced through learning alternative behaviour patterns, through conditioning, for example. Behaviourism is particularly crucial to media effects research because violent media content has frequently been conceived as an external force that is capable of influencing individuals' learning patterns and subsequent behaviour.*

Critique of Instinctivism and Behaviourism

The theories of instinctivism and behaviourism may appear to be distinct on a fundamental basis, yet there are similarities. For instance, both positions assume that human beings are machines that have no psyche with its own inherent laws and structure; these machines produce either inherited patterns of the past (instinctivism), or social patterns of the present (behaviourism):

"Whether man is the product of conditioning, or the product of animal evolution, he is exclusively determined by conditions outside his own life, no responsibility, and not even a trace of freedom. Man is a puppet, controlled by strings – instinct or conditioning."

(Fromm, 1973: 110)

Instinctivists, such as Lorenz (1966) and Leyhausen (Lorenz and Leyhausen, 1968), believe that the psychology of human phenomena, including aggression, can be explained by evolution. The difficulties arise when the term, 'explain', is defined: if 'explain' means to understand how humankind reached their present neurophysiological state through the development of ancestral primates, then yes it can be explained; if 'explain' means to grasp why an individual is aggressive at a particular moment, then it cannot. The problem with both instinctivist and behaviourist theories is their reductionist stance. Neither attribute any sense of freedom or responsibility to humankind, they are simply assumed to be reactive beings with no self-propelling purpose:

"I quite simply think, first of all, that conditioning processes are not the real causes of human behaviour; secondly, that the real cause is something accessible, provided that the humanness of human behaviour is not denied on *a priori* grounds; and thirdly, that the humanness of human behaviour cannot be revealed unless we recognise that the real 'cause' of a given individual's behaviour is not a cause but, rather, a reason."

(Frankl, 1978: 53-54)

Hence, the major limitation of these two traditions is less about their content than their approach to the human subject. Instead of acknowledging that humankind is an active race which is responsible for its own destiny, instinctivism and behaviourism both deny this possibility; humans are conceived as automated machines which are controlled by forces beyond their control. The perhaps desirable implication of this is that violence is no longer considered as an essentially human problem because it is either instincts or society, not humans, that are the causes of violence. However, the insights offered by Fromm (1973) and Frankl (1978), for example, have not been widely accepted in a psychology which promotes the approach of the natural sciences to human behaviour.

More recent developments of the theory of behaviourism are presented in the following two sections about Social Learning Theory and the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis.

Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory, although its origins may be traced back to behaviourism, has stressed the ways in which human aggression differs from that of lower animals. Several factors can intervene in human aggression that are less significant, if not absent, in other animals' behavioural patterns. These are said to be the result of social learning and can either inhibit or induce aggressive behaviour (Aronson, 1995). Berkowitz (1989) simply states that the difference between humans and other animals is the significance of learning in human behaviour. Aggression, according to Berkowitz (1989), is the complex interplay between innate propensities and learned responses. He develops this point, proposing that the innate patterns of behaviour in humans are infinitely modifiable and flexible rendering the assumption that humans will respond to specific stimuli, e.g. a threat to territory, in the same way as other animals do, invalid. Rather the determinants of human aggression may include a number of factors.

A field experiment conducted by Hunt (1940) demonstrates that social change may induce aggression. He observed the *Iroquois Indians who once lived peacefully before the neighbouring Huron Indians started to compete in the fur trade for manufactured goods*. This led the Iroquois Indians to act aggressively and in turn they developed ferocious fighting techniques in order to survive. Also, imitation has been observed to increase the likelihood of aggression (Bandura, Ross and Ross, 1963a, 1963b 1961). The child subjects in Bandura et al's (1963a, 1963b, 1961) experiments did not simply copy the behaviour of the model but also were reported to invent new forms of aggression illustrating that the effect of a model is a generalised one and not simply imitative. The intention perceived in an aggressor or someone/something that has frustrated a subject may similarly induce aggressive behaviour (Mallick and McCandless, 1966). This has been termed the hostile attributional bias (Baron and Byrne, 1994). In their experiment, Mallick and McCandless (1966) found that when charity is not donated when requested by subjects, if a justified reason is given by the potential donor then subjects are less aggressive toward them than if the reasoning seems hostile or unjustified. In a similar experiment Johnson and Rule (1986) found that adult subjects are less likely to react aggressively toward an aggressor or frustrator when a valid reason is given prior to the aggressive behaviour. A degree of anonymity

on the part of subjects responding to frustration has also been demonstrated to increase the likelihood of an aggressive response (Zimbardo, 1969). Similarly the effect of a crowd has been shown to increase the gravity of aggression. Mullen (1986) reviewed the newspaper reports of lynchings that took place between 1899 and 1946 in the United States of America and found that the larger the mob size the more heinous the crimes. This suggests that when individuals are part of a crowd they appear faceless, they are less self-aware and less mindful of the prohibitions against aggressive, destructive behaviour and consequently believe they are less responsible for their actions (Aronson, 1995).

According to the social learning theory, aggression is a complex form of social behaviour that is largely learned through past experience; “people in different cultures learn to attack others in contrasting ways – by means of kung fu, blowguns, machetes, or revolvers” (Baron and Byrne, 1994: 439). Additionally, individuals learn which persons/groups are appropriate targets for aggression, which actions justify or require aggressive responses, and in which situations or contexts aggression is appropriate and inappropriate (Baron and Byrne, 1994). Berkowitz (1969, 1974) goes so far as to suggest that if an aggressive cue is present, this alone can induce aggressive behaviour whether or not that cue is implemented:

“Guns not only permit violence, they can stimulate it as well. The finger pulls the trigger, but the trigger may also pull the finger.”

(Berkowitz, 1968: 22)

To summarise, the social learning theory argues that aggression and violence are not simply initiated by external factors in society, but that they are learned by individuals in different cultures as appropriate, or inappropriate, reactions to certain situations. The social learning theory is especially pertinent to media effects research because its central argument is that viewers of violent television and film will learn inappropriate behaviour through being exposed to media violence.

Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis

Dollard, Miller, Mowrer, Sears and Sears (1939) claim in their theory to have found the ultimate cause of aggressive behaviour: frustration. Dollard et al (1939) suggest that aggressive behaviour presupposes the existence of frustration and that frustration

always leads to aggression. However, it soon became clear that this proposal was too simplistic, therefore Miller (1941) omits the second part of the statement and instead proposes that frustration may result in a number of different responses, aggression is just one of them.

Evidence has been found that frustration can lead to an aggressive response in pigeons (Azrin, Hutchinson and Hake, 1966), although in humankind identifying the precise factors at work in the frustrating situation is problematic (Berkowitz, 1978). Emphasising this inherent difficulty, Bandura (1973) suggests that any incident of aggression could be attributed to frustration of acquisitiveness or assertiveness rendering the statement unequivocal. As a result, following theoretical postulations were based on the more specific hypothesis that:

“If an individual is thwarted on the way to a goal, the resulting frustration will increase the probability of an aggressive response.”

(Aronson, 1995: 276)

However, this also appeared to be too general a claim. A classic experiment by Barker, Dembo and Lewin (1941) depicted a clear relationship between frustration and aggression. Barker et al (1941) showed a group of children a room of attractive toys, half of them were then allowed to play with them whilst the other half were kept away from the toys although they were still in view. The second half, when eventually permitted to play with the toys, were destructive whilst the group who were not frustrated played happily. Several experiments then followed which introduced a number of qualifying factors into the frustration-aggression hypothesis. Harris (1974) asked students to push into queues at restaurants and grocery stores, some would push in to the second place in the queue, whilst others pushed in twelfth in line. The members of the public that were nearer the front of the queue reacted more aggressively than those twelfth in line, hence, when the goal is nearer to a subject and frustration is exerted on that person, an aggressive response will ensue. Additionally, when the interruption to a goal is unexpected or appears to be illegitimate, frustration is increased (Kulik and Brown, 1979).

These findings have led the theorists to add qualifications to the statement concerning the relationship between frustration and aggression:

“frustration is most pronounced when the goal is becoming palpable and drawing within reach, when expectations are high, and when it is blocked unjustifiably [. . .] frustration is not simply the result of deprivation; it is the result of relative deprivation.”

(Aronson, 1995: 277-278)

It appears, therefore, that frustration can be the cause of aggression but only in particular circumstances. Aronson's (1995) conclusive statement, above, is influenced by the notion that hope which cannot be satisfied leads to frustration, which in turn results in aggressive behaviour, a sentiment expressed over one hundred years ago:

“Evils which are patiently endured when they seem inevitable, become intolerable once the idea of escape from them is suggested.”

(de Tocqueville, 1981, cited in Aronson, 1995: 278)

However, others would argue that frustration is inevitable when striving for goals and that this is a strength, rather than a weakness, which assists in the development of humankind. Frustration can occur without aggression being a foregone conclusion, in fact it is the character of an individual which either induces or inhibits the use of aggression (Fromm, 1973).

Psychoanalysis

In terms of its theoretical origin, psychoanalysis is instinctivist, but therapeutically it is environmental. Freud (1923) uses the term, 'trieb,' which denotes a somatically rooted drive that is impelling but not strictly deterministic, in order to distinguish it from the concept of the 'instinct' used in instinctivism. However, for ease, in the remainder of this section Freud's notion of 'trieb' will be referred to as 'instinct'. The environmental aspect of psychoanalysis is illustrated in therapists' focus on the clients' relationships and experiences during infancy, through reference to the libido theory. Perhaps most crucial, however, in Freud's psychoanalysis are the unconscious processes which make up the human being and which ultimately influence his/her instincts which become manifest in concrete behaviour:

“Freud's revolution was to make us recognise the unconscious aspects of man's mind and the energy which he uses to repress the awareness of

undesirable desires [. . .] He was the first scientist to explore in depth, the underworld in man, and that is why his ideas had such an impact on artists and writers at a time when most psychiatrists still refused to take his theories seriously."

(Fromm, 1973: 119)

These unconscious forces not only influence overt behaviour, but are integrated in a dynamic system which Freud termed 'character'. The development of Freud's notion of character first became apparent in his description of the *Anal Character* (1908). This led him to the conclusion that behavioural traits can be explained as a sublimation of, or reaction formation against, libidinal satisfaction or frustration of anality (Fromm, 1973), in other words, it is the libido (oral, anal, and genital) that is the source of energy which constitutes character. Consequently, character is the outcome of an interaction between instinct and environment:

"Love, tenderness, sadism, masochism, ambition, curiosity, anxiety, rivalry – these and many other drives were no longer each attributed to a special instinct, but to the influence of the environment (essentially the significant persons in early childhood), via the libido."

(Fromm, 1973: 122)

This is not to suggest that aggressive behaviour is determined by character. Rather character traits demonstrate how an individual would like to act, if it were possible. This qualification, 'if it were possible' is essential and is evident in Freud's theory of the reality principle and the pleasure principle (Freud, 1920). The reality principle is driven by self-preservation, while the pleasure principle is based on the sexual instinct that seeks the satisfaction of passions, whether sexual or non-sexual. There is, therefore, constant conflict between the demands of self interests and lustful desires. A character continuum is set along which individuals exhibit differing degrees of self interests and character-rooted passions; at one extreme would be the martyr or the fanatical killer whose motivation is purely driven by passions and at the other extreme would be an opportunist who would do anything in his/her self interests that will promote success. Therefore, instead of adopting the deterministic ideology of behaviourism and instinctivism, which select either environment or instinct as the sole source of aggression, psychoanalysis integrates these two aspects of human experience in

proposing that both of them have a simultaneous input into an individual's character. Through this mix of internal and external factors, Freud argues that although humankind is capable of behaving in a way that promotes self-preservation, this is not what must always occur; it is also possible that human beings will choose to risk freedom, fortune, or life in the pursuit of love or greed, hate, or destructiveness. Fromm (1973) underlines the biggest fear of Freud's concept of dynamic character:

"The discovery of unconscious processes of the dynamic concept of character was radical because it went to the roots of human behaviour; it was disquieting because nobody can hide any longer behind his good intentions; they were dangerous, because if everybody were to know what he *could* know about himself and others, society would be shaken from its very foundations."

(Fromm, 1973: 125)

It is proposed that this fear of inherent 'evil' in human nature remains as potent today as it did when Freud revealed his theory of psychoanalysis. The popularity and perpetuation of theories which relinquish individuals of responsibility, such as instinctivism, behaviourism and the later theories of social learning and frustration-aggression, perform the function of hiding such unpleasant possibilities from the scientific and public spheres. The consensus in society, and in mainstream psychology, is that human beings are not capable of brutal or destructive behaviour; there is always some other factor that is to blame, be it responses that have been learned through experiences of reinforced behaviour patterns, an innate drive toward aggression, or representations of violence in the media. Hence, it is proposed that the dominance of the effects hypothesis within research about media violence is a further illustration of this blaming culture which takes responsibility away from those who partake in violent behaviour.

Humanistic-Existential Psychology

A straightforward solution to the problem of deterministic approaches to aggression, it would appear, is to adopt the opposing philosophy of humanism. However, as Frankl (1978) points out, the added freedom which humanism offers again underestimates the significance of responsibility in human behaviour and experience:

"We departed from determinism as a limitation of freedom and have arrived at humanism as an expansion of freedom. Freedom is part of the story and half of the truth. Being free is but the negative aspect of the whole phenomenon whose positive aspect is being responsible. Freedom may degenerate into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibility."

(Frankl, 1978: 60)

Hence, the way forward is to develop a psychology which acknowledges both the self-propelling aspects of a human subject who is free to make choices as well as the situational factors which limit those choices. Lacking in the above theoretical traditions is the notion of agency. Continually, both psychological theory and empirical investigation, have sought that component which makes people violent. The possibility that individuals, and indeed nations, may want to behave violently and destructively has been overlooked, almost without question. The humanistic-existential approach to human aggression and violence does not blindly reject this eventuality, to the contrary, it is the human components of such behaviour which are considered to be of primary importance.

The theories proposed by May (1972) and Fromm (1973) have been selected to exemplify the humanistic-existential approach to aggression and violence due to the thoroughness with which these topics are covered. Although there are similarities in terms of philosophical assumptions, May (1972) and Fromm (1973) propose two theories, and as such will be discussed in succession.

May's (1972) theory, in his text, *Power and Innocence: A search for the sources of violence*, stresses the significance of the fight/flight response; the flight response occurs due to anxiety and fear, while fight is driven by aggression and violence. Further, a third alternative, the delayed response, is identified by May. The delayed response is proposed to be the most frequent and involves the individual absorbing the details of an event into his/her consciousness before action is taken. The intention of the individuals in the situation, together with unconscious factors, are both interpreted before a response is offered. This illustrates that in order for a person's violence to be conceptualised and responded to, it is necessary to understand the world in which that individual acts.

Unlike previous approaches, the humanistic-existential perspective recognises the many facets that comprise 'violence'. Both May (1972) and Fromm (1973) discuss several types of violence that are by virtue distinctly human. May identifies five types of violence: *simple violence*, *calculated violence*, *fomented violence*, *absentee violence* and *violence from above*. *Simple violence* often involves high moral demands and the surging of pent-up energy which releases a sense of freedom to those who protest against being placed in impotent situations. May suggests student rebellions as an example of *simple violence*, which in this sense can be described as a "cry for significance" (May, 1972: 35) to overcome a feeling of powerlessness. This kind of violence is often exploited by leaders who then take control, for instance, in the French revolution; this is termed, *calculated violence*. Again, *fomented violence*, concerns the stimulation of mass frustration and impotence, but it is directed by the leader for his/her purposes. Hitler's mobilisation of Germany's youth through his Nazi party in 1930-33 is an example of *fomented violence*. *Absentee violence* (or instrumental violence), according to May, defines the way in which the public become involved in national violence. Through electoral support for political leaders the British public, even if only by default, backed the military campaigns against Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War and Slobodan Milosevic in the Yugoslavian conflict of 1999, for example, whether or not they are for or against the war effort in itself. The fifth kind of violence identified by May is *violence from above*. This is said to be more destructive than the previous forms because it involves the use of existing forces, such as the police, in a political attempt to protect or re-establish the status quo in response to a threat. The police carry weapons which are then used for punishment instead of protection:

"The police are taken out of their rightful role as apprehenders and are made punishers [. . .] The violence becomes more destructive precisely because it is a perversion of previous protectiveness."

(May, 1972: 187)

In addition, May acknowledges that there exists both destructive and constructive violence. *Destructive violence* is described as "violence [that is] a uniting of the self in action" (May, 1972: 187):

"Jean-Paul Sartre writes that violence is creating the self. It is an organising of one's powers to prove one's power, to establish the worth of the self. It is a risking all, a committing all, an asserting all. But it unites the different

elements in the self, *omitting* rationality. This is why I have said above that the uniting of the self is done on a level that bypasses reason. Whatever its motive or its consequences may be within the violent person, its result is generally destructive to the others in the situation.”

(May, 1972: 187-188)

Again in May's *destructive violence* is the theme that violence represents a cry for significance. In essence this indicates that in adopting violent behaviour the individual is active, s/he is seeking fulfilment through a process of self-growth. However, due to the loss of rationality which violence demands, it is a “macabre logic” (May, 1972: 190) that drives *destructive violence* rather than any kind of positive energy. May expresses concern about the availability of guns in contemporary society stating that “this form of technology not only vastly increases the range and the effectiveness of violence but also has a strong effect – generally dulling – on the consciousness of those who use them” (May, 1972: 188).

Similarly, *constructive violence* provides a behaviour through which self-recognition can be achieved. *Constructive violence*, however, is often perceived as a positive act that occurs after years of a submissive, powerless existence. May gives the following example:

“When a woman who has been docile all her life finally loses her temper and breaks out in a tirade, we find ourselves smiling and silently cheering; at least she is not longer apathetic.”

(May, 1972: 192)

Violence is only considered constructive, however, when one is living at a subhuman level. This may happen to individuals but can also occur on a greater scale. Although in both cases this cry for significance is an unconscious one, it can elevate underdeveloped individuals and groups to the human level, May's example could be applied to any minority group that strives for recognition and equality:

“the violence is not of the native's choosing, even though it is generally made to look that way. The colonial powers took an active role in setting natives against each other and, as a result, consolidating their own interests [. . .] Violence is the only way for the blacks not only to throw off

the yoke of the colonial powers but also to develop some unity among themselves.”

(May, 1972: 193)

May's attempt to identify the sources of violence is a brave one as it acknowledges the deliberateness with which humankind adopts violence. Additionally, rather than simply attributing violence to a restrictive society that uncontrollably determines the behaviour of its inhabitants, May talks of the “attractive, alluring, and fascinating” (May, 1972: 165) aspects of violence:

“We deny with our minds the ‘secret love of violence’, which is present in all of us in some form, at the same time as we perform violent acts with our bodies. By repressing the awareness of the *fact* of violence, we can thus secretly give ourselves over to the enjoyment of it. This seems to be a necessary human defence against the deeper emotional implications we would have to face if we were to admit the reality of this ‘secret love’.”

(May, 1972: 166)

This notion of the attractiveness of violence is taken one step further in his proposal that all its fascinating qualities are best denoted by the term, 'ecstasy'. May accepts that this term appears to be inappropriately related to violence, yet, this is simply due to the contemporary common usage. Ecstasy today is often used to explicate the intensity of an emotion which usually is a positive one. However, this term is taken from the Greek, which means “to stand outside oneself,” to be “beside one's self”, or to be “out of one's self” (May, 1972: 166). This indicates a sense of self-transcendence that goes beyond conventional ego boundaries in a comparable way to Buddhist meditation. The similarities of expression between ecstatic experiences and violence, according to May, is an example of the total absorption that can be felt through violence, for instance, to be “outside one's self” with rage, or to be “possessed by power”.

To summarise, May's theory suggests that it is the misconception that violence is an uncontrollable, purely evil, and fixed example of the way in which humankind is determined by external factors, that has suppressed the development of psychological knowledge. Once the alluring aspects of violence are acknowledged then a proper investigation of the sources of violence can be elaborated.

Fromm's (1973) work, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, is the second example of a humanistic-existential theory of violence and aggression. Fromm stresses that before violence can be understood it must be made clear that the violence of humankind is essentially distinct from that of other animals:

"man's destructiveness and cruelty cannot be explained in terms of animal heredity or in terms of a destructive instinct, but must be understood on the basis of those factors by which man differs from his animal ancestors. The problem is to examine in what manner and to what degree the specific conditions of human existence are responsible for the quality and intensity of man's lust for killing and torturing."

(Fromm, 1973: 253)

Again the primary task in Fromm's theory is to break down the umbrella concept of violence in order to eradicate the otherwise inevitable ambiguity involved in the investigation of it. Fromm does this by distinguishing between two entirely different kinds of aggression: *benign aggression* and *malignant aggression*. *Benign aggression* is a phylogenetically programmed impulse in response to the threat of a person's vital interests and can be in the form of either fight or flight; this kind of aggression serves survival and is biologically adaptive. Additionally, the act of *benign aggression* is terminated once the threat ceases to exist. *Malignant aggression*, on the other hand, is destructive and cruel, it lacks purpose and its satisfaction is lustful. This type of aggression is biologically maladaptive and does not serve survival. Fromm makes a crucial distinction between instinct and character: *benign aggression* is rooted in organic drives which fulfil the physiological needs of the species, whilst *malignant aggression* is driven by character-rooted passions. These passions, or "existential needs" (Fromm, 1973: 294), are uniquely human and are of primary significance to the psychological inquiry into any human behaviour, including violence:

"These passions [. . .] are at the very heart of human existence, and not a kind of luxury which we can afford after the normal, 'lower' needs have been satisfied [. . .] They are so intense precisely because man would not be man without them. [. . .] Man's passions are not banal psychological complexes that can be adequately explained as caused by childhood trauma. They can be understood only if one goes beyond the realm of reductionist psychology and recognises them for what they are: *man's*

attempt to make sense out of life and to experience the optimum of intensity and strength he can (or believes he can) achieve under the given circumstances."

(Fromm, 1973: 31)

Fromm (1973) further breaks down the types of aggression that fall under the terms, *benign* and *malignant*. Benign aggression is said to be made up of two major components, *pseudo-aggression* and *defensive aggression*. *Pseudo-aggression* encompasses several aspects of violent behaviour: *accidental aggression*, which is unintended; *playful aggression*, including sport, which is an exercise of skill; and *self-assertive aggression*, which is the most important aspect of pseudo-aggression (Fromm, 1973). The latter is crucial to contemporary understanding of the term, 'aggression,' because its current meaning is an alteration from its original definition. The linguistic root from which 'aggression' developed is *aggredi* which literally means "to move (go, step) forward" and the opposite *regredi*, to regress, means "to move backwards". "To aggress", a phrase that has now become obsolete in English, is an intransitive verb, i.e. one can aggress but one cannot aggress somebody. Fromm (1973) suggests that the modern day understanding of aggression developed through the usage of "to aggress" in a war scenario where the act of moving forward meant the beginning of a battle. Hence, "to be aggressive, in its original meaning of 'aggressing', can be defined as *moving forward towards a goal without undue hesitation, doubt, or fear*" (Fromm, 1973: 256).

Defensive aggression is the closest kind of human aggression to that of animals, in that both are phylogenetically programmed to react against threat to their vital interests:

"Even though this innate tendency operates less rigidly in man than in lower mammals, there is no lack of evidence that man tends to be motivated by his phylogenetically prepared tendency for defensive aggression when his life, health, freedom, or property (in those societies where private property exists and is highly valued) are threatened. To be sure, this reaction can be overcome by moral or religious convictions and training, but it is in practice the reaction of most individuals and groups. In fact, defensive aggression accounts perhaps for most of man's aggressive impulses."

(Fromm, 1973: 264-265)

However, humankind is more likely to react aggressively in less serious situations of threat than are lower animals. Despite the limited comparability between the neurophysiology of the attack/flight response of defensive aggression in humans and animals, Fromm proposes that “this same neurophysiological equipment leads to an incidence of defensive aggression many times greater in man than in the animal” (Fromm, 1973: 265). This is due, according to Fromm, to the specific conditions of human existence. For example, humankind’s awareness of danger is inferior to that of animals because the ability of foresight and imagination make it possible that an act of aggression may occur as a result of memories of past dangers or imagined future dangers that may or may not exist in reality. Secondly, it is possible to persuade and brain wash human beings into believing that there is a threat when none exists, for example propaganda during war time, this requires a social structure and a language which are not at work in the animal kingdom. Thirdly, the range of humankind’s vital interests is far wider than the simple life or death situations that occur in animal communities. Humankind’s survival is defined not only in physical terms but also psychically. Fromm (1973) professes that retaining a sense of orientation and of the self constitutes one of humankind’s vital interests, i.e. objects of devotion, values, religion, and ideas are considered sacred, therefore if they are threatened this is an attack that warrants defensive aggression. Additionally, the emotions of fright and anxiety may result in an aggressive response:

“Fright, like pain, is a most uncomfortable feeling, and man will do almost anything to get rid of it. There are many ways to get rid of fright and anxiety, such as the use of drugs, sexual arousal, sleep, and the company of others. One of the most effective ways of getting rid of anxiety is to become aggressive. When a person can get out of the passive state of fright and begin to attack, the painful nature of fright disappears.”

(Fromm, 1973: 268)

Hence, even when aggression is considered to be defensive, human beings react in a less restricted way and are more prone to aggression than their animal ancestors. The second type of aggression identified by Fromm (1973), *malignant aggression*, illustrates how this readiness to behave violently can be utterly cruel and destructive.

Malignant aggression is uniquely human and does not serve the physiological survival of the species, it is however, crucial to humankind's mental functioning. *Malignant aggression* is one of the more powerful human passions, or existential needs:

"destructiveness is one of the possible answers to psychic needs that are rooted in the existence of man, and that its generation results [. . .] from the interaction of various social conditions with man's existential needs."

(Fromm, 1973: 294)

Within *malignant aggression*, Fromm identifies *apparent destructiveness*, *vengeful destructiveness* and *ecstatic destructiveness*. *Apparent destructiveness* includes the participation in archaic rituals that appear to be destructive but are in fact sacred. History is almost purely organised around the narrative of blood and gore, but according to Fromm, the performance of such rituals are not necessarily driven by the passion to destroy. Blood is a life force and constitutes one of the sacred substances of the body, the others being semen (of the male) and milk (of the female); blood, however, transcends the gender divide. An example of the use of blood in traditional rituals is in the religious ceremony of drinking wine once it has been consecrated as Christ's blood. In this interpretation, blood is the affirmation of life, not the destruction of it.

The cruelty and destructiveness to which Fromm refers in his discussion of malignant aggression comprise two forms of aggression, that which is spontaneous and those bound by character. *Spontaneous aggression* is defined by Fromm as an eruption of destructive impulses which were dormant, although not necessarily repressed, in circumstances of a particular nature. This kind of aggression is contrasted with character-rooted aggression which is permanently present within character traits, even though it is not always being expressed. *Spontaneous aggression* is spontaneous in that there are external factors which stimulate it together with subjective motives, such as extreme narcissism.

The history of civilisation, with its many wars, provide many examples of spontaneous aggression:

"The history of war is a report of ruthless and indiscriminate killing and torture, whose victims were men, women, and children. Many of these

occurrences give the impression of orgies of destruction, in which neither conventional nor genuinely moral factors had any inhibiting effect. Killing was still the mildest manifestation of destructiveness. But the orgies did not stop here: men were castrated, women were disembowelled, prisoners were crucified or thrown before the lions. There is hardly a destructive act human imagination could think of that has not been acted out again and again."

(Fromm, 1973: 361)

The potential for such horrific destructiveness is cultivated by the conditions of human existence and is mobilised by a sudden traumatic event.

Vengeful aggression can, on the surface, be compared to defensive aggression as it is adopted in response to intense and unjustified suffering. However, that is where the similarity dissolves; *vengeful aggression* occurs after the damage has been done, it is of a greater intensity, and its goal is lustful and insatiable. *Vengeful aggression* can be described as a "thirst for vengeance" (Fromm, 1973: 363). Fromm identifies all forms of punishment as blood vengeance, a deep-rooted human passion that is said to uphold social stability. Vengeance is a kind of 'magic reparation' with the aim of achieving a sense of "existential equality" (Fromm, 1973: 364 and 365). In essence, the judicial system of law and order assumes the position of a god in its perceived nullifying of violent crime through the punishment of those who commit it.

Ecstatic destructiveness is the third kind of aggression identified in Fromm's malignant aggression. This can be compared to May's (1972) notion of a cry for significance. *Ecstatic destructiveness* is adopted in response to an intense feeling of powerlessness and separateness (Fromm, 1973). In order to overcome this existential burden, one must achieve a trance-like state of ecstasy. This is possible through a number of activities. First, the act of love making could be described as "the natural prototype of complete concentration and momentary ecstasis" (Fromm, 1973: 367). This state can also be achieved through religious beliefs, or the use of drugs. Some cultures perform rituals through which the feeling of ecstasy can be realised, for instance the Teutonic tribe involves itself in a ritual whereby individuals induce a state of trance before they take on the behaviour of a bear and they then 'go berserk' in order to reach a sacred state of rage. This ritual symbolises the beginning of manhood. Similar festivals also illustrate ways in which communities bring on the frenzy of rage in order to achieve

ecstasis. In Spain there is a village custom where men crowd the streets and bang drums, through the rhythm of the drums a trance-like state is reached and the participants are engulfed by a passion to destroy, or in this case, to beat.

The varieties of aggression proposed by Fromm exemplify the innate complexity within the human occurrence of violence. Together the theories of May (1972) and Fromm (1973) provide a starting point that is lacking in many mainstream accounts of violence. It is through their admission of, and convincing arguments in favour of, humankind's ability to actively choose to be aggressive that their significance is laid bare. Without this acknowledgement of the agency and consequent responsibility of human aggression, theories of violence are incomplete and misled. Psychology has forgotten the primary uniqueness of the human condition and in doing so has taken the wrong path in explaining one of the most fundamental components of human existence, violence.

The implications this has for the study of vicarious violence are two fold. First, the issue of choice has been systematically overlooked in the study of responses to violent media. Psychology has not considered that people may actively choose to experience violence vicariously through television programmes and/or films which contain representations of violence. Instead it has assumed that violence is an unwelcome ingredient of the visual media. Second, in focusing on investigating a potential causal link between exposure to violent media and violent behaviour, psychology has forsaken the possibility that individuals would behave violently in spite of any images which they may consume via the visual media.

Summary of the Psychology of Violence and Aggression

The story of the theories of violence can be compared to the story of psychology. As different schools of thought developed so did their respective theories. The epistemological assumptions made by psychologists throughout the growth of the discipline, and the ramifications of those assumptions, are evident through the various ways in which violence is described. For instance, the behaviourists have described violence as a conditioned response which is brought about by a depraved world, while for the instinctivists the onus is on the individual's innate drive, and the frustration-aggression hypothesis defines violence as a result of being frustrated. Fundamental in psychology, however, is the conceptualisation of the human subject, which pervades

each of these definitions of violence. Whether humankind is attributed agency and responsibility or whether it is considered to be determined solely by either internal or external stimuli dictates the nature of the theories developed. In turn, the theoretical perspectives adopted by researchers permeate the empirical investigations of the occurrence of violence in reality. Consequently, the theories of violence which have developed are crucial to both the practice of research and to the psychological understanding of experiencing of violence vicariously.

2.5 The History of Violence in Popular Culture

Violence is not a recent development in the human world, as a study of the occurrence of war alone would show. To the same extent, experiencing violence vicariously via forms of entertainment goes hand in hand with human history. This section will attempt to illustrate the enduring presence of violence in popular culture by offering some brief examples of the stories of violence in myths, nursery stories, folklore, drama and literature both from the past and the present. It is by no means a comprehensive account of representations of violence in popular culture throughout the ages, because that would require a thesis of its own. However, the following discussions are sufficient to illustrate that contemporary cultures are not alone in their consumption of violent narratives, on the contrary, the civilisations of ancient and medieval times were also saturated with stories of violence.

Violence, is a recurring theme in many stories that have been told, re-told and passed down through generations. The presence of violence is evident in two fundamental ways: in the images conjured up by the narratives themselves and in the audience (i.e. viewer/reader/listener/teller) responses that ensue. The violence of representation will be discussed using examples from Greek and Roman mythology, medieval drama and fairy tales; and the feeling of being scared will be considered through an examination of lullabies, nursery rhymes, drama and folklore. These images and responses will be considered within the context of modern day representations of violence in popular culture. Within these discussions four major themes which constitute such violent representations in entertainment, religion and mythology will be included, these are the destruction of the person, metamorphosis, and darkness and blood.

The Destruction of the Person

The mythological tale of Kronos and Zeus, in Hesiod's *Theogony*, is one example of cannibalism. In the Greek interpretation Kronos is the chief of the gods and is told that one of his children will overthrow him. To prevent this Kronos devours his children one by one. However, to ensure the survival of Zeus, Rhea, his mother, tricks Kronos and offers him a stone wrapped in swaddling bands instead of his son, Zeus. The same story is told in Roman mythology featuring Jupiter (the Roman Zeus) and his father Saturn (the Roman Kronos). There is a degree of discrepancy between these two mythical accounts and their subsequent iconography (Warner, 1998). Renaissance painters made this devouring of Kronos'/Saturn's children more gruesome. Instead of swallowing his children whole (as he must have done if he was fooled into eating a stone) they depicted Kronos/Saturn chewing off limbs, eating his children head first, or biting into their chests, as in Rubens' (1636) and Goya's (1797-8) pieces both entitled, *Saturn Devouring his Children*.

This theme of genocide is also present in the Biblical story of Herod (Matthew 2:13-23). When Herod hears of Jesus' birth and his status as King of the Jews, he ordered the slaughter of all baby boys under the age two, but an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to leave with the baby and his mother, so they fled to Egypt. This story is also the topic of a medieval drama, known either as *The Massacre of the Innocents* or *The Killing of the Children*. A copy of the play dated 1512 was written as part of a series entitled, *Candlemes Day and The Kylling of the Children of Israelle* (cf. Coldewey, 1993) which was played once a year on St. Anne's day. The crucial scene in this play goes as follows:

WATKYN: avaunt ye, showtys! [out, shrews!] I defye you everyone!
For I wole bete you alle, myself alone!

Hic occident pueros [Here they slaughter the boys]

MULIERA 1 [Mother 1]: Alas, allasse, good gossyppes! [godsisters]
This is a sorowfulle peyn,
To see these caytyres thus sodeynley to be slayn!
A vengeance I aske on them alle for this grett wrong!
(Coldewey, 1993: 266)

Introduced into this version of the play was the “darkly humorous character,” Watkyn, a messenger with cowardly misgivings:

“The dramatic effect of humour, pathos, and terrible violence joined together so wretchedly in this way has yet to be explored adequately.”

(Codlewey, 1993: 254)

A modern day example of such dark humour is in a scene from the film, *Pulp Fiction*, where Vincent Vega (John Travolta) accidentally kills the passenger in the back seat of his car. The ensuing conversation between Travolta and his colleague, Jules (Samuel L. Jackson), is purely about how they are going to get off the road and clean up the mess:

“The disparity between the callous, domestic trivia of their anxieties and the magnitude of the horror is appallingly funny.”

(Warner, 1998: 260)

Such examples reflect the way that representations of death and cruelty are often tied in popular culture to comic elements. This may perform the function of lessening the atrocities portrayed, or it may heighten them.

This is not the only instance of cannibalism in contemporary culture. Cannibalism is also connected to Christian practices. *The Feast of Corpus Christi*, celebrated at Passover time, is profoundly significant in the Christian calendar. It marks The Last Supper (Matthew 26: 17-30) when Jesus informs his disciples of his betrayal at the hands of Judas Iscariot and he asks them to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him. This communion is central to the Christian faith, particularly so in Catholicism, making it an especially potent example of metaphorical cannibalism in the Western world. In this practice however, Christianity purifies cannibalism, re-interpreting it as salvation. The taking of consecrated bread and wine represents the miracle of transubstantiation, as the congregation believe this to be Christ's body and blood. *The Feast of Corpus Christi* is also reminiscent of *The Massacre of the Innocents* in festivals that takes place around the Catholic regions of Europe. For example in Berga, Catalonia, the *Patum* festival involves *El Colacho* (the Devil) leaping over the year's

new born babies (see Warner, 1998: 123). Again it is through risking the lives of the innocent that violence and destruction are faced.

Metamorphosis

Metamorphosis is the second major theme of violence that can be illustrated both in ancient mythology and in modern drama. The Greek mythological character, Scylla, is a female monster whose marine metamorphosis has been described as a cruel and terrible curse. She is a hybrid with canine and marine features; she is a double-tailed mermaid, a siren, with dogs' heads spouting from her hips. In Ovid's *The Art of Love*, Scylla is also attributed a perpetual litter of puppies squirming in her womb. She is a cannibal, who feeds on passing ships, and whose appetite is "never glutted, only briefly stalled" (Warner, 1998: 87). It is her abhorrent appearance, her insatiability, and her consequent bitterness and wickedness that is significant in the development of the cursed female in later narratives. Scylla could be the forerunner to the Loathly Lady of Medieval Arthurian Legend and her "inwardly monstrous even if outwardly lovely" characteristics can be found in modern day equivalents such as the deadly females of *Fatal Attraction* and *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (Warner, 1998: 93). The recurring theme within these examples is the fundamental evil of the women involved which is coupled with their ability to lure victims through their insatiable attractiveness. Hence, once more violence is portrayed alongside some apparent opposing quality, before it was comedy and now it is sensuality.

Lullabies and Nursery Stories

Stories of cannibalism and metamorphosis are not restricted to the ancient myths, of gods, and of Christianity. They are also surprisingly prevalent in the tales that parents and carers have been telling children for generations. Lone children, evil step-mothers and ogres are among the most memorable components of the nursery stories and fairy tales heard at home and at school. The Grimm Brothers wrote several such stories including *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Three Little Pigs*, and *Billy Goats Gruff*, all of which contain the threat of cannibalism in some form or other. Even the story of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, which may be remembered as a cheerful, musical story (Browning and Amstutz, 1994), was actually a rather sinister tale (Adès, 1992):

"Though not dwarfish or otherwise monstrous, the Piper appears in the motley sometimes worn by the devil, and even more often by the fool who

mocks the truth, while the mountain, which uncannily opens when he plays in order to swallow the children, in the familiar habitat of elves and dwarfs and giants and other messengers from the dark side.”

(Warner, 1998: 30)

These scary figures, who have children as their victims, are not limited to fairy stories, they are also present in lullabies, perhaps the first stories heard by an infant. Consider the nursery rhyme, *Hush-a-bye, Baby*:

“Rock-a-bye baby on the tree top,
When the wind blows the cradle will rock;
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,
Down will come cradle, baby and all.”

(Gammer Gurton’s Garland version, cited in Warner, 1998: 197)

Usually lullabies, and other bedtime rhymes, aim to help the infant fall to sleep. They do this, however, by scaring the baby into sleeping so that the ‘bogeyman’, whatever form he may take, will not come and eat them up. This popular rhyme is one example:

“Goodnight, sleep tight
Don’t let the bed bugs bite
If they bite squeeze them tight
And they won’t bite another night.”

(Warner, 1998: 45)

This scary figure reappears in many forms, from stories like the Grimm Brothers’ *The Little Red Riding Hood*, to the folklore beliefs about ogres and giants. Ogres have become the generic other, to be wary of and to keep safe from. These ogres also have cannibalistic characteristics. In *The BFG* (1982), Roald Dahl is very blunt in naming his giants Fleshlumpeater, Bonecruncher, Childchewer, Gizzardgulper, Maidmasher and Bloodbottler, also reflected in this extract:

“ ‘Oh yes,’ the BFG said, ‘A dream were you is seeing little chiddlers being eaten is about the most frightsome trogggle-humping dream you can get. It’s

a kickly bog thumper. It's a choppy grobswitcher. It is all of them, riddled into one'."

(Dahl, 1982, cited in Warner, 1998: 53)

Reference to cannibalism and metamorphosis can also be found in contemporary films, but with a modern twist. *Silence of the Lambs*, for instance, has both; Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) eats his victims and Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine) makes a woman suit from the skin of his victims. The audience becomes attached to Lecter because of his pleasant manner and his obvious intelligence and sophistication in spite of his taste for the human flesh and his undoubted callousness and disrespect for humanity. On the other hand, Buffalo Bill, equally callous in his quest to become a woman, becomes the topic of mockery, he is bizarre, stupid, and naïve yet a cruel individual. What is easily forgotten is that the two are serial killers, ogres of the modern day world. The difference being that they do not look like monsters, they are people like anyone else.

Fear and Laughter

Marina Warner's (1998) *No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock* has been the primary source for this historical look at violence in popular culture and in it she underlines just how integral a part violence plays in our cultural education and spiritual growth through stories and events alike. Watching a *Punch and Judy* (Bertwistle and Prusiu, 1968) show on the beach, for example, is a cherished moment in a child's life but is s/he aware of the gruesome, violent acts that occur?:

"Children's resilience springs from their laughter [. . .] If they did not laugh at Mr. Punch's antics, they would be very frightened [. . .] laughter, mixed in with horror, produces the particular millennial feature of the late grotesque."

(Warner, 1998: 16-18)

This response of laughing due to fear is also readily present today in teen and adult culture in the form of horror films. For example, *Scream* and *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, involve the horrific murders of teenagers. These are typically jumpy horror films that have been consistently popular throughout cinema's history:

“the conditions of being scared is becoming increasingly sought after not only as a source of pleasure but as a means of strengthening the sense of being alive, of having command over self.”

(Warner, 1998: 6)

May (1972: 171) also evaluates this fascination with experiencing violence vicariously through entertainment in his work and he calls it “the aesthetic ecstasy of violence”: when viewing a play, for instance, wherein a character uses violence in a situation that deems it aesthetically legitimate, i.e. when nothing else would have sufficed, the audience feels a sense of relief and at “that point there is for the audience the experience of the ecstasy of violence in aesthetic terms” (May, 1972: 170). May proposes that when violence is such an integral part of a drama and such a response is experienced, then audience is confronted with their own mortality:

“Death is always present to us as a possibility. It is this possibility which gives meaning to life and to love. No matter how much we may fondly hope that we can set our own manner and time of death, the dread of the horror of death is present in our imagination. For it is not the fact itself, but the meaning of it that is important.”

(May, 1972: 171)

Shakespearean tragedy is an example where the violence is considered necessary for the aesthetic completeness of the dramatic experience. Consequently, in Shakespearean tragedy “we not only experience our own mortality but we also transcend it; the values that matter stand out more clearly” (May, 1972:171-2). In this sense, violent drama has the existential function of stimulating the audience members to confront their own personal fears of death and of living in a violent world. The same could be said of violent film. However, the possibility that something could be gained from experiencing violence vicariously through the medium of popular film is distinctly lacking from the existing research literature.

Darkness and Blood

The aesthetic Gestalt to which May (1972) refers can also be manifest in the sinister darkness present in the dramas of writers such as Shakespseare. *Macbeth* is one example of a Shakespearean tragedy which has this sinister darkness throughout:

"The vision of the dagger, the murder of Duncan, the murder of Banquo, the sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth, all come in night-scenes. The witches dance in the thick air of a storm, or, 'black and midnight hags', receive Macbeth in a cavern. [. . .] In the whole drama the sun seems to shine only twice."

(Bradley, 1992: 293)

Blood is also a major theme in *Macbeth* and features in some of the most memorable scenes. For instance just after the murder of Duncan, Lady Macbeth tells her husband:

"LADY MACBETH: And wash this filthy witness from your hand.-
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there: go carry them and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood."

(*Macbeth*, Act 2: Scene 2)

Later in the same scene Macbeth attempts to wash the blood from his hands:

"MACBETH: Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red."

(*Macbeth*, Act 2: Scene 2)

The blood metaphor recurs throughout the play and much later Lady Macbeth despairs, rubbing her hands, saying:

"LADY MACBETH: What, will these hands ne'er be clean?
Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of
Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!"

(*Macbeth*, Act 5: Scene 1)

The darkness and bloodiness of *Macbeth* did not cease with Shakespeare but persists in the imagery of contemporary films. Crimes are often scripted at night time, consider the darkness of *Cape Fear*, of *Silence of the Lambs* or *The Usual Suspects*. In

addition, of course, the majority of horror film monsters lurk in the shadows scaring their victims in the seemingly perpetual darkness. Take for example the series of *Halloween* films. Similarly, some films seem to incorporate a spectacular amount of blood, for instance in *Reservoir Dogs*, *Scarface*, *Full Metal Jacket* and *Donnie Brasco*.

Summary of the History of Violence in Popular Culture

The dominant violent themes in ancient and medieval literature and drama include cannibalism, metamorphosis, darkness and blood. Each of these motifs make for a sinister and grotesque backdrop to the stories told. The modern day films mentioned throughout this section, together with many others (e.g. *King Kong*, the *Alien* series, the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, *From Dusk Till Dawn*, and *The Mask*, to name but a few) demonstrate that these special features of drama remain as a profoundly significant element of contemporary film entertainment. In short, the bloody scenes of violence portrayed in modern film was by no means created simultaneously with the cinematic screen. Violence has been pervasive in the stories told throughout history. The texts referred to in this section constitute a narrow glimpse at what has gone before within the bounds of entertainment. A thorough investigation of ancient and medieval storytelling would certainly reveal that violent material has featured greatly throughout the development of civilisation. The fact is that violence represents one of the fundamental conditions of being human; it is destructive, it is evil, it is bloody and grotesque, but at the same time it is fascinating, alluring, and it is omnipresent in the dramatisations of human life which have entertained generations of people through the centuries.

2.6 Summary

The aim of this chapter has been to evaluate the existing literature concerning media violence in order to contextualise the aims and purpose of this project. The diversity of studies outlined in 2.2 *Psychological Research* and 2.3 *Mass Communications Research*, the range of theoretical interpretations summarised in 2.4 *The Psychology of Violence and Aggression*, and the evidence of violence within the literature and theatre of past and present in 2.5 *The History of Violence in Popular Culture*, each display the significance and complexity of the issues surrounding the study of violence as entertainment. The pejorative manner in which violence is defined in the majority of theoretical postulations and research alike is contrasted with its continual presence

both in the ways that human beings conduct their lives and in the means by which they find distraction from an otherwise mundane existence.

The occurrence of violence in real life has been oversimplified in the dominant theories of instinctivism and behaviourism in the same way as the heterogeneity of media violence has been overlooked in effects research. The value of these contributions, nevertheless, is unquestionable because they are crucial if knowledge is to be gained, used and re-framed in original ways. Fundamental to the pursuit of knowledge is the notion of hindsight; it is through critically evaluating both the advancements and setbacks of past work that novel questions arise. However, this process requires a change in approach if something other than a replication of prior understanding is to be obtained. A common problem has been identified in the traditions of instinctivism, behaviourism and effects research in the course of this chapter, which needs to be overcome if knowledge is to be furthered. Each of these positions attributes human violence to some external factor (i.e. an aggressive instinct, a depraved world, and representations of violence in the media), which is outside the control of the individual. In short, humankind is conceived as ultimately innocent and devoid of responsibility. The implication of this is that theory and research have attempted to find causes for violence which are outside the human realm.

This problem has been acknowledged and proposals have been made which confront the possibility that people may want to behave violently, in the shape of Freud's reality and pleasure principles, May's cry for significance and ecstasy of violence, and Fromm's benign and malignant aggression. However, these innovations have remained on the periphery of psychology. Similarly in research, psychology has lacked the open-mindedness which is evident in the work on perception and audience responses in the discipline of mass communications, for example, but has opted to continue in the battle to confirm the effects hypothesis, i.e. that exposure to violent media content will lead to increased violent behaviour in real life. In short, it is the lustful and the wilful aspects of human violence which have been systematically ignored in mainstream psychological inquiry yet it is these very issues that must be faced:

"One of the reasons we have made so little progress in our mitigating of violence is that we have determinedly overlooked the elements in it that are

attractive, alluring, and fascinating. Our minds tend to castrate the topic in the very act of understanding it."

(May, 1972: 165)

The same is true of violence as entertainment: in order to understand media violence the benefits gained from experiencing it must be explored. It is time that psychology acknowledged the popularity of violent film in contemporary culture and began to investigate why this is the case. This is why the study of the meanings audience members attribute to violent film is crucial, because without knowing what it means to those who experience it, media violence cannot be fully understood.

This chapter has shown that the topic of media violence has been studied extensively both in psychology and in the discipline of mass communications. However, there is little evidence to suggest why individuals choose to experience violence through the channel of popular film, what they gain from this experience and what it means to them within the context of everyday life. These unanswered questions are the starting point of this research project. Moreover, this critical evaluation has shown that the lack of progress can be attributed to the simplistic and closed approaches which have dominated the study of media violence. Hence, it is proposed that, in order to add to existing knowledge, psychology must start anew in its quest to understand the experiencing of violence vicariously. Further, a reassessment of the paradigm which best suits the investigation of human experience is required if psychology is to overcome the problems that have been inherited from positivism. The next chapter discusses the methodological decisions made in this project and will make clear the benefits of taking a new approach to the study of experiencing violence via the medium of popular film.

A Disciplined Inquiry into the Psychology of Violence

3.1 Introduction

The prevalence of methodological critiques within the current climate of psychological research is remarkable. However, if an historical account of psychology were to be undertaken it would show that this is no new phenomenon (cf. Giorgi, 1970). Psychology's association with the natural sciences has dictated much of what has occurred throughout the development of the discipline. Nevertheless, alongside the growth and subsequent dominance of positivism there have been dissenting voices, in the shape of work by Wilhelm Dilthey, William James, Edmund Husserl, and Franz Brentano, for instance. These voices have stressed the significance of consciousness and context in the study of human experience and have therefore proposed that instead of borrowing the assumptions of the natural sciences, psychology should rather be conceived as a human science. The problem is essentially epistemological and informs the nature of a research project from its conception through its development to the final product. Due to the complexity of this on-going debate within psychology and the somewhat misplaced emphasis on the quantitative-qualitative distinction (Hiles, 1999; Bryman, 1984), this chapter is organised in a way that will outline clearly the principles and choices which have informed this particular research design.

The model guiding this chapter is inspired by the notion of *disciplined inquiry* (Braud and Anderson, 1998), which is defined thus:

“Research (disciplined inquiry) is simply a modified form of a more general approach to life, and to our activities, in which we attentively make observations and thoughtfully draw conclusions about consistencies, inconsistencies, and patterns. Ideally, we do this with mindfulness and discernment, basing our judgements on all available relevant information and weighing the sources of these judgements for their histories of accuracy and use.”

(Braud and Anderson, 1998: 11 and 13)

Mair (1999) defines "re-search" as a "searching again" thereby emphasising its circular nature, a sentiment echoed by Braud and Anderson (1998):

"If we look more closely at the meanings of *research*, we see that the word also suggests searching again, anew, back; going about again or going around again; and circling around again. This circling around again and again provides a fine metaphor for the research enterprise: By moving around a topic, examining it carefully from many perspectives, we eventually gain a more complete understanding of what we are examining. The image of the circle suggests completeness, wholeness, regularity, order, and, indeed, disciplined inquiry itself."

(Braud and Anderson, 1998: 25-26)

Hiles' (1999) paper develops this concept of disciplined inquiry by providing an effective way of breaking down the decisions that are made whilst designing a research project. He describes a model of disciplined inquiry which constitutes four stages: the *paradigm*, i.e. the assumptions made concerning the nature of truth, reality, knowledge and its use; the *strategies* chosen in regard to how the research will proceed; the *methods* which are adopted in order to collect the data; and the tools chosen for data *analysis*.

Hiles (1999) argues that through psychology's misplaced concern on method it has lost sight of its paradigms. Too often research is criticised on the basis of the methods implemented alone without any consideration of its philosophical underpinnings. Hiles refers to Morgan (1998) as an example of this kind of blind criticism. As this chapter unfolds the significance of paradigm in the makings of a research project will become abundantly clear; it is the assumptions made about the nature of the human condition, of reality and knowledge which guide decisions on how to investigate human behaviour and experience. However, due to the dominance of the natural scientific approach to psychology it is often automatically assumed that positivism is the only paradigm available to psychologists. The implication is that any research which does not comply with positivist assumptions and methods is thought to be invalid. The answer, according to Hiles (1999), is to clearly stipulate the paradigm within which the research project is conducted, whatever it may be.

Once the paradigm is established the question of strategy emerges. Again the strategies undertaken have rarely been made explicit in research reports. Adopting strategies entails making decisions about how the phenomenon is to be explored, how participants are to be treated, and how the researcher is to be involved in the processes of research. The choices made are fundamentally linked to the paradigm and will influence the methods of data collection and analysis chosen, as such they provide an invaluable bridge between the conceptual basis of the research and the action taken (Hiles, 1999).

The final two stages in designing research are to determine which methods of data collection and analysis to employ. The method of data collection is chosen with regard to its appropriateness to both the research question(s) and the strategies to which the researcher is committed. It is possible that multiple methods will be adopted and that the nature of data collection will influence the analysis undertaken.

The task of this project is to investigate individuals' experiencing of violence vicariously via the medium of popular film. Due to this, it is necessary to create a research design which will sufficiently reveal the intricacies of this experiencing process. Understanding individuals' subjective conceptualisations of violence, their responses to it, and the ways in which individuals make sense of violence is the objective of this research. Consequently, the paradigm within which this project is conducted and the strategies employed must be sensitive to these factors of human experience. Similarly, the methods used must enable the collection and in-depth analysis of meaningful data.

Hence, these four decision-making processes are vital in planning research and, when made explicit, they assist in the overall understanding of what the research aims to achieve. It is these four components of paradigm, strategies, methods and analysis, which make up the next four sections of the chapter. In addition, there will be a fifth section which will discuss the ethical issues which are to be taken into consideration when conducting a disciplined inquiry.

3.2 Paradigm

In his discussion of disciplined inquiry, Hiles (1999) refers to Guba and Lincoln's (1994) definition of a paradigm as "a set of basic beliefs that deals with ultimates or first principles [that] are not open to proof in any conventional sense" (Guba and Lincoln,

1994: 107 and 108). In other words, the paradigm presupposes a number of basic assumptions concerning the nature of reality, of knowledge and, in the case of psychology, the nature of the human subject, which then dictate the manner in which research proceeds. The paradigm of this research is human scientific psychology (e.g. Giorgi, 1970; Polkinghorne, 1983). The assumptions made within psychology as a human science are discussed below and the implications are manifest throughout the whole research process, as will become clear in the subsequent three sections.

The subject matter of psychology is the human being's behaviour in and experience of the world. The task of human scientific psychology therefore is to understand those aspects, using Heidegger's (1962) term, of being-in-the-world that are unique to the human condition. Further, it is assumed that to be human is to be actively and consciously living in the world. This means that rather than being determined solely by the world, the human subject is in a constant dialogic relationship with the world:

"People and the world are in a dialogue with each other. For this reason, people can be seen as partly active because they are always acting on their world in a purposeful way, and partly passive because the world is acting on them (i.e. the world presents situations in which the person must act)."

(Valle, King, and Halling, 1989: 8)

The implications of this are that the context in which people live is essential to the understanding of their experiences; the task would be incomplete if conducted in isolation without consulting the cultural environment in which these experiences occur. Human phenomena are far more complex than the natural objects with which they have been compared in the paradigm of positivism, for instance. The mechanistic model that was employed in the natural sciences, with its belief in the universal applicability of causal laws, has prevailed throughout the majority of psychology's history. Moreover, the axiom that future behaviour can be predicted through establishing antecedent conditions has dominated (Valentine, 1992). Indeed, as psychology began to establish itself as a science, it was generally believed that to be scientific meant following empirical methods that would result in the identification of causal relations (Williams and May, 1996). However, if the dialogic relationship between person and world is to be taken seriously, as it is in the paradigm of human

scientific psychology, then the investigation of cause and effect is meaningless (Valle et al, 1989). By the same token, Williams and May (1996) illustrate why the definition of science by a particular method, i.e. that of establishing causal laws, is equally meaningless:

"In this sense, science is method. It follows that if there is more than one method, then there is more than one science."

(Williams and May, 1996: 15)

Psychology's long awaited break away from the natural sciences is discussed at length by Giorgi (1970) in his book, *Psychology as a Human Science*. It is his definition of human science which defines the paradigm within which this research takes place:

"what I mean to communicate by the term 'human science' is that psychology has the responsibility to investigate the full range of behaviour and experience of man as a person in such a way that *aims* of science are fulfilled, but that these aims should *not be implemented* primarily in terms of the criteria of the natural sciences."

(Giorgi, 1970: xii)

Throughout his career Giorgi (1995, 1994) has continued to advocate psychology as a human science and he discusses at length the origin of this concept. The notion of psychology as human science was developed by a number of European philosophers at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth Centuries following an earlier distinction which was made by Cournot in 1851 (Valentine, 1992). Cournot felt the need to separate the *Naturwissenschaften* (the natural sciences) and the *Geisteswissenschaften* (social sciences, philosophy, history, jurisprudence and the humanities) because of the differences in their subject matter and their consequent methodologies. Wilhelm Dilthey developed this inspiration, illustrated in Palmer's (1969) study of his work:

"Concrete, historical, lived experience must be the starting and ending point for the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Life itself is that out of which we must develop thinking and toward which we direct our questioning."

(Palmer, 1969: 99)

Further establishing the differences between the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften*, Dilthey succinctly said, "We explain nature; man we must understand" (1958, cited in Palmer, 1969: 115). Two key figures within psychology, Wilhelm Wundt and William James, also expressed the fundamental differences between investigations of lower order processes on the one hand, which could be studied in an experimental situation, and social phenomena on the other, such as thinking, judgement and language, which for various reasons cannot be treated in the same way: "the number of variables, their interaction and the history of the organism" (Wundt, 1862, cited in Valentine, 1992: 7) must be acknowledged, rather than isolated, if knowledge is to be gained successfully. Similarly, James stressed the significance of studying consciousness, will and experience in psychology, each of which, he professed, should be approached in a descriptive rather than an experimental manner (Giorgi, 1970).

The fundamental principle of human scientific psychology therefore is to prioritise those phenomena which are uniquely human. In order for this to be achieved, a radically different set of criteria are required from those established in the natural sciences. Instead of the hollowness of reductionism and determinism within this 'human' context psychology can be meaningful and fulfilling:

"The gist of these critiques [of the natural science approach to psychology] is that although such assumptions and practices have been useful in *certain areas of sciences for certain purposes, they are incomplete, contain unnecessary biases, are unsatisfactory for addressing complex human actions and experiences, and are inadequate even within the natural sciences themselves. More important, such assumptions and practices yield a picture of the world, and of human nature and human possibility, that is narrow, constrained, fragmented, disenchanted, and deprived of meaning and value. Such a view is more consistent with feelings of emptiness, isolation, and alienation than with feelings of richness, interconnection, creativity, freedom, and optimism.*"

(Braud and Anderson, 1998: 6)

If the essence of psychology is to understand, then the channels through which this can be achieved are meaning and language. It is not events themselves that human

beings respond to, but the meanings of those events within the immediate and wider contexts of life:

"Experience is meaningful and human behaviour is generated from and informed by this meaningfulness. Thus, the study of human behaviour needs to include an exploration of the meaning systems that form human experience."

(Polkinghorne, 1988: 1)

The significance of meaning to this project will be expanded in the forthcoming discussions. It is sufficient at this time to highlight that meaning overrides measurement in human science research.

This split from reductionism and the restrictions of a psychology which is only interested in causal explanations is guided also by the paradigmatic assumption that reality is not a singular, fixed entity which is out there to be discovered. Rather, it is a relativist view of reality which is assumed in this project, hence, the existence of multiple truths and realities is acknowledged. Once this is accepted the pursuit of knowledge is no longer concerned with establishing universal laws of behaviour and consequently the findings of scientific inquiry are no longer considered to be the actual, irrefutable truth:

"There is an openness to qualitative diversity, to the multiplicity of meanings in local contexts; knowledge is perspectival, dependent on the viewpoint and values of the investigator."

(Kvale, 1996: 42)

Kuhn's (1962) book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, is somewhat of a landmark study within the philosophy of science. It was he who stressed the significance of both the scientist as a person and science as a community. This opened up the fact that however much scientists attempt to conduct their work objectively and free from bias, in actual fact the process cannot escape subjectivity: choices are made, hypotheses are generated and methods are selected with respect to particular theories, in this sense the observations conducted in empirical studies are said to be theory laden (Williams

and May, 1996). Science, then, is defined as a "dialectical process" (Giorgi, 1970: 105) which is in essence a product of the beliefs and practices of the time in which it occurs:

"If [. . .] theories are determined not only by what there 'is', but also by which is prioritised then we can see how various orthodoxes, whether they be religious or secular, can play a part in determining what the priorities of science will be."

(Williams and May, 1996: 33-34)

Previous psychological studies of media violence, as evaluated in the preceding chapter, focused on establishing the causal link between watching violent media content and ensuing violent behaviour in real life. This approach is pervasive within the literature due to the overpowering dominance of the positivist tradition in psychology. Researchers were forced to accept this dominant régime in order to fit into the 'natural attitude', i.e. that scientific inquiry must meet the criteria of natural science. As previously stated, the paradigm in which this piece of research is conducted renders that approach meaningless when applied to the phenomenon of media violence. It is assumed that human beings are active and purposeful throughout the course of life and this includes whether or not experiencing violent film becomes a part of that life. Experiencing violence vicariously, through whatever channel, involves choice, therefore each individual who encounters violence via a film has made a conscious decision to do so. The nature of individuals' subjective lived experience is considered crucial to this study, consequently, this psychological inquiry is placed within a phenomenologically sensitive paradigm.

Phenomenology has much to offer psychology defined as a human science (Giorgi, 1995, 1970). Instead of adopting the realist perspective (or the 'natural attitude'), where knowledge is conceived as a fixed entity independent of the human realm, phenomenology refers to knowledge "as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience" (Moustakas, 1994: 26). Following on from this concept of knowledge is phenomenology's notion of intentionality, which also sheds light on the previously mentioned dialogic relationship between the person and the world and its significance in a phenomenologically sensitive psychology (Benner, 1994). Valle et al (1989) stress the fluidity of lived experience which is expressed through the notion of intentionality:

"Intentionality addresses the ongoing dimension of our consciousness, that we are always in relation to that which is beyond us."

(Valle et al, 1989: 11)

Intentionality is a concept which dates back to the Aristotelian philosophy that the mind is always oriented to its object and, in turn, that objects exist in an intentional way (Kockelmans, 1967). It was Franz Brentano (1995) who incorporated this idea into the discipline of phenomenology; intentionality encapsulates Brentano's proposition that consciousness is not an isolated feature of the human mind, rather the mind has an intentional relation to the objects in the world, i.e. the mind is not simply conscious in an indiscriminate manner, but is always conscious of something (Crane, 1995). The relevance of intentionality to this project is concerned with the intentional nature of experience and of meaning. The interactional nature of subjective lived experience is stressed once more through the concept of intentionality, i.e. the intentional relation between the individual and the world (Grossmann, 1995). Further, it is from within the dialogic of this relationship between world and subject that meaning originates (Giorgi, 1970). In his comprehensive work on these issues, Giorgi refers to Kockelmans' (1966) proposition that "meaning is the result of the encounter between man and the world, an encounter in which both are essentially involved" (Giorgi, 1970: 160). In other words, the meanings attributed to events are derived through the intentional way in which the mind is conscious of them. Consequently, in order to understand human experiences, psychologists must investigate the meanings of those experiences.

Phenomenology has also introduced to human scientific psychology the notion of the life-world (or *lebenswelt*), which, succinctly defined, is the structured universal realm which is made up of all the beliefs, values, feelings, assumptions and cultural practices through which the meaning of everyday life is constituted (Kögler, 1995). The implication of the life-world, which is essential in this investigation, is that behaviour and experience are assumed to be constructed within a cultural context. Thus, subjective lived experience occurs within a specific contextual environment which, by default, influences psychology's pursuit of knowledge:

"Within the perspective of psychology conceived as a human science, the main concern is to discover the actual, by means of description in order to

learn about the structure of the situation as a whole, which is done by revealing the context."

(Giorgi, 1970: 191)

It follows, then, that the traditional exclusion of contextual factors, adopted in positivist psychology, would be futile in an investigation such as this. Rather, it is that meaningful context within which life is lived, i.e. the life-world, which is crucial to a research project committed to understanding human experiences; "research into meaning is the most basic of all inquiry" (Polkinghorne, 1988: 9). It has long been argued that meaning should be the pivotal force in the pursuit of knowledge in the human sciences (e.g. Giorgi, 1995; Spinelli, 1989; Polkinghorne, 1988; Frankl, 1978, 1974), therefore the present assumption is that in order to understand human experience, it is necessary to reveal the meanings that are attached to it:

"Man is always reaching out for meaning, always setting out on his search for meaning; in other words, what I have called the 'will to meaning' is even to be regarded as 'man's primary concern'."

(Frankl, 1978: 29)

Through adopting the paradigm of human scientific psychology this research is committed to a number of objectives. *The primary goal is to gain an understanding of individuals' experiences of violence via the medium of popular film*, moreover, it is to obtain this in ways which conform to the paradigm of human scientific psychology. This means that the human subject is treated as being actively engaged in dialogue with the social realm and that in order to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the personal world, significant attention is paid to both the social and personal contexts in which these experiences occur.

3.3 Strategies

The strategies adopted in a research project fulfil several requirements. The researcher must determine how the phenomenon under investigation is to be explored, how the participants are to be treated, and how the researcher him/herself will be involved throughout the research process. Such decisions are made in accordance with the specified paradigm and they will strongly influence the types of method and analysis utilised. The strategy adopted in this project is an open-ended, exploratory one,

designed to use the data to its full potential in order to progressively reach theoretical understanding.

Through its adoption of the natural science approach, psychology became severely restricted in the types of studies that were possible. The aims of natural science are to predict and control natural phenomena (e.g. Valentine, 1992; Giorgi, 1994, 1970). This, in the main, is achieved through the construction of hypotheses which are then tested via experimentation. Experimental studies require that the phenomena under investigation be isolated, there must be systematic variation of the variables involved, and the procedure must be repeatable (Romanynshyn and Whalen, 1989). This may be possible when dealing with the naturally occurring phenomenon of crystallisation, for instance, but psychologists have attempted to apply this approach to the issue of media violence. The limitations of such an approach are demonstrated through the restricted manner in which media violence has been studied in the paradigm of natural scientific psychology; testing the simplistic causal hypothesis that watching violent films leads directly to violent conduct in real life became the only possible question. Williams and May's (1996) claim about the history of science, which is equally relevant to natural scientific psychology, clarifies the limitations of a cause-effect model in psychology:

"The search for cause and effect, in history, is as mistaken as the alchemists' search for gold."

(Williams and May, 1996: 62)

It is argued, therefore, that instead of allowing tradition to dictate the strategies adopted in research practice, the guiding force should be the nature of the subject being studied:

"because the subject matter [of psychology] includes man as a person it must pursue these aims in ways that are different from the ways that natural sciences pursue their aims. Consequently, in psychology, because man as investigator takes man as a person as subject matter, we call this type of pursuit a human science."

(Giorgi, 1970: 123)

Hence, this investigation, rather than being concerned with testing the hypothesis that exposure to representations of violence in the visual media will lead to violent behaviour, is an exploratory study of peoples' experiences of violence in the context of popular film. Due to the assumed prominence of meaning in the everyday activity of living and making sense of the world (Spinelli, 1989), that is where this research project must begin. The aim is to understand media violence from the viewpoint of its audience, it is not solely concerned with supporting an existing theory. As a result, the strategy implemented is an open-ended one that is, to an extent, comparable with Grounded Theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The defining characteristic of Grounded Theory, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), is that the theoretical outcome of research is derived from the data:

"Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data driving the course of the research. Generating a theory involves a process of research."

(Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 6)

This is an inductive approach, meaning that the theoretical propositions made are developed in direct correspondence with the data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that because this is essentially a bottom-up method instead of the traditional top-down (i.e. hypothetico-deductive method), the theory that is generated will be a better fit because of its affinity with social reality. It is this aspect of Grounded Theory which outlines the strategic organisation of this piece of research.

Rather than conducting a single study which is then analysed as a complete body of data, this investigation involves a series of studies which take place in succession. The procedure adopted can be viewed as a spiral, in that, at each level of data collection the focus becomes more specific because data collection and analysis occur simultaneously, as is required by Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 1995). The first phase of research is considerably open-ended, guided solely by an area of interest expressed in the research question. This is then analysed to elicit themes within the data which are developed into codes. The results of this preliminary analysis then direct what will be the focus of the next data collection phase. This spiralling process continues until sufficient data has been accumulated to answer the questions posed.

The nature of this project, like Grounded Theory research, requires a different sampling scheme to that generally used in psychological research. Again this relates back to the dominance of the natural scientific approach to psychology: if the aim of research is to test hypotheses which will then either support or refute universal laws of behaviour, it follows that the sample to be studied must be representative of the population as a whole. Conversely, human scientific psychology's interest lies in understanding human experience, which, due to the existence of multiple realities and its focus on the subjective lived experience of individuals, need not attempt to make its sample a representative one. The general objective of human scientific psychology is to uncover the complexities and idiosyncrasies of the human condition, which in turn renders generalisation of results an unessential goal.

The sampling method chosen in this study is theoretical sampling. Instead of having a predetermined sample before the study begins, sampling theoretically means that decisions about the sample are made as a result of the evolving theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967):

"Beyond the decision concerning initial collection of data, further collection cannot be planned in advance of the emerging theory [. . .] The emerging theory points to the next steps [. . .] The basic question in theoretical sampling is: *what* groups or subgroups does one turn to *next* in data collection? And for *what* theoretical purpose?"

(Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 47)

In a sense, once each stage of data collection is complete, the research project extends in depth and narrows in focus. The aspects of the inquiry which represent both the primary concerns of those being investigated and the most significant theoretical developments in terms of answering the research questions steer the direction of the entire research process.

This approach is ideal in an exploratory study such as this. Of considerable importance in this research are the meanings which are attributed to experiences of violence via the visual media, an issue which has been lacking in some of the previous studies cited in Chapter 2. Through the flexibility of an approach sensitive to the essence of Grounded Theory, a researcher can gain relatively unrestricted access to those

meanings. The meanings of violence, i.e. the ways in which individuals define 'violence' as opposed to scientists, become the starting point of the inquiry which then leads to investigating specific experiences of representations of violence in film.

The way in which participants are treated in a research project is also a feature of the strategy implemented. Traditionally in the natural science approach, psychologists did research *on* people, treating them as reactive beings and observing their behaviour; in human scientific psychology scientists conduct research *with* people. The implication of this is that participants are respected as active, thinking individuals and their point of view is valued. Therefore, rather than using peoples' behaviour to make conclusions about a particular theory, people are invited to share their experiences in order to give insight to the phenomenon under investigation. In this sense, the research is a negotiated alliance between researcher and participant(s), in which the participant has a more active role than in experimental studies, for example. Both Heron's (1996, 1998) co-operative inquiry and Reason's (1994a, 1994b) participative inquiry inform this approach.

The next strategic decision concerns the nature of the data which will best reveal meaningful subjective experiences. The most fruitful channel through which this kind of information can be obtained is language because "language is commensurate with meaning" (Polkinghorne, 1988: 10). The empirical study of naturally occurring talk is a relatively new phenomenon in psychology, mainly due to the belief that the inclusion of subjective data would render the investigation unscientific. This is not so. Giorgi (1970) refers to the clarification Brentano made concerning experimentation and the need to be empirical; experimentation is not the only manner in which empirical research can be conducted. Giorgi (1995) extends this argument and in doing so supports Polkinghorne's view:

"Although the material realm might be best studied by the use of quantifying procedures and statistical estimates, the realm of meaning is best captured through the qualitative nuances of its expression in ordinary language."

(Polkinghorne, 1988: 10)

It is through allowing the 'experiencers' (i.e. those who have watched films containing representations of violence) to talk openly, that these nuances of experience will be revealed and the content of a disciplined inquiry unveiled.

The strategy of this project is to treat both the participants and the data in an open manner. Participants' voices are given priority in revealing the nature of the phenomenon at hand because it is their experiential accounts which guide the development of the research process, including the questions asked at later stages of data collection. The result is a scientific inquiry which, rather than attempting to confirm predetermined ideas, allows the theory to emerge through listening to the data.

3.4 Methods

The methods are those techniques used to collect data, i.e. they are the means by which the researcher gathers information from the participants. As stated previously, this project involves three studies which are conducted in succession. The methods implemented in each were chosen with respect to their ability to *answer the questions* posed at each stage of the research process. In the first two studies semi-structured individual interviews are used, while in the third a series of semi-structured inquiry groups was considered most appropriate. Bearing in mind the paradigmatic assumptions and strategic decisions made in this project, the following sentiment expressed by Robson (1993) encapsulates the motivation behind the methods of data collection selected:

"When carrying out an enquiry involving humans, why not take advantage of the fact that they can tell you things about themselves?"

(Robson, 1993: 227)

The aims of semi-structured individual interviews and inquiry groups are to gain access to the life-worlds of people who have experienced violence via the medium of popular film and to reveal the meanings attributed to those experiences (Kvale, 1996; May, 1993). In order to make explicit the nature of the interviews and inquiry groups conducted and the reasons behind these choices, a brief history of the methods is required.

The dominance of positivism in psychology has not only affected the approaches adopted in research, but has also influenced the method of interviewing in a fundamental way. Fontana and Frey (1994) refer to Booth's study, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1902-1903), to illustrate that before the growth of positivism in the social sciences the kinds of interviews conducted were unstructured to the degree that they could be compared to ethnographic interviewing. Immersion into the culture being studied was essential to understand, in Booth's case, the social and economic conditions of people living in London at that time. However, a change in focus was soon effected and persisted for a number of decades. In 1935 George Gallup founded the American Institute of Public Opinion which standardised survey research and, in turn, interviewing techniques. This meant that the eclectic and qualitative nature of interviewing associated with researchers like Booth was abandoned in favour of quantification (Fontana and Frey, 1994). The implications of this change are manifested in the typology of interviewing which is generally accepted today: this includes structured interviewing, semi-structured interviewing, and unstructured interviewing (e.g. Breakwell, 1995; Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, and Tindall, 1994; Fontana and Frey, 1994; Burgess, 1984).

It is proposed that it is the nature of the questions asked and the paradigm underpinning the research process which dictate both the purpose and structure of the research interview. However, in the hey day of psychology conceived as a natural science the structured interview was held in highest regard. The structured interview is typically adopted in survey research, for example, where the aim is to ask standardised questions to a representative sample, each with a set of predetermined answers, in order to gain generalisable data (May, 1993). The ordering and wording of questions must remain the same throughout the series of interviews and any elaborate account offered by interviewees is discarded (Fontana and Frey, 1994). In the structured interview, therefore, the interviewer has control over the situation, both in terms of the direction of the interview and what is considered relevant information:

"In short, the interviewer is assumed to have power over the respondent who is given a subordinate role in this context."

(Burgess, 1984: 101)

At the other extreme is the unstructured interview, defined as such due to its lack of rigidity and control. However, the possibility of an interview free from structure is arguable. Even when researchers immerse themselves within a culture or sub group, sometimes conducting a series of intense interviews over a period of months, the interviews always have an agenda. It is suggested therefore that a more fitting term would be the minimally-structured interview; in such an interview the researcher has an implicit purpose, for example, to complete a research project concerning the lives of a certain population. In a semi-structured interview, on the other hand, that purpose is made explicit, either in the shape of an introductory statement as the interview commences or an agreement between researcher and participant made prior to that. In the methodological literature there is considerable overlap between accounts of unstructured and semi-structured interviewing techniques, for this reason the two types are discussed as one under the title, semi-structured interviewing.

Semi-structured interviewing is one of the methods adopted in this research. It is guided by an interview schedule, detailing a number of topics to be discussed; it is a flexible process, however, and questions may be asked in different orders, omitted or extra ones added, depending on the context of that particular interview scenario (Banister et al, 1994; Robson, 1993). In fact, this kind of interview is *less structured* in every sense of the word. It is able to uncover a greater depth of information (Fontana and Frey, 1994; Banister et al, 1994) because the interviewer is open to unexpected answers and, essentially, answers which may appear at first to be irrelevant. Nothing is omitted from the interview discourse, whatever its nature or subject matter.

In this way, although the interviewer has an agenda to meet, the interview is directed more by the interviewee than the interviewer. Thus, the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is more of a collaboration than a question-answer session. This approach is more fruitful, especially when dealing with sensitive issues, because rather than simply asking questions of the informants, it enables the development of open-ended co-operation between the interview participants:

"it is desirable to make the interview pleasing to the persons being interviewed. It should seem to him or her an agreeable form of social intercourse."

(Webb and Webb, 1932, cited in Burgess, 1984: 139)

An additional type of interviewing included in the literature is the group interview, otherwise known as a focus group or an inquiry group. Usually the group interview is selected for the specific reason that it generates a discussion between participants:

"The hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group."

(Morgan, 1997: 2)

The group interview can vary in the same way as individual interviews regarding structure (Fontana and Frey, 1994). Ordinarily, however, group interviews involve a discussion which is led by a moderator and is focused on a particular topic (Morgan, 1997). This focussing component has been described as the distinguishing characteristic of group interviewing (Millward, 1995), which led to use of the term focus group. Focus groups have gained widespread use in mass communications research in order to gather information in response to a film or an extract from a television programme, for instance, but in the social sciences the stimulus of the discussion may be an aspect of behaviour, a concrete event or a particular concept (Millward, 1995).

There is some debate in the literature concerning the nature of a focus group, in comparison with an interview which happens to include multiple participants. Morgan (1997) argues that the name focus group should be applied as an umbrella term:

"Instead [of distinguishing between group interviews which are focused and those which are not], I find it more useful to think that the degree of formal structure in a focus group is a decision that the research makes according to the specific purposes of the research project. In particular, the use of either a more formal or less formal approach will depend on the researcher's goals, the nature of the research setting, and the likely reaction of the participants to the research topic."

(Morgan, 1997: 6)

Morgan's (1997) argument is taken seriously within the strategy of this research project. It is for the reasons he specifies that the second method is the inquiry group

rather than an interview which happens to involve multiple participants. Inquiry group is yet another term which has appeared relatively recently in the context of 'new paradigm' or qualitative research techniques. Heron's (1996) text, *Co-operative Inquiry*, approaches the problem of power relations in psychological research; he proposes that instead of the traditional researcher-researched divide, the way forward is to relate to participants as collaborators who act alongside the researcher. Moreover, all those involved in the research process are known as co-researchers. This notion of co-operation was taken on board in the inquiry groups conducted in this study insofar as the researcher fulfilled the minimal role of a facilitator, encouraging the participants to openly discuss whatever was significant to them about the research topic. The structure implemented depends upon the nature of the phenomenon under investigation and the research questions which are to be investigated. In this case, the goal of the inquiry groups was to explore the group's experiences of one particular instance of violence in a contemporary film, therefore the job of the facilitator was to ensure that the discussions focused upon issues relevant to this topic.

The methods adopted in this study, then, are semi-structured individual interviews and semi-structured inquiry groups. These two types of interviewing share certain characteristics and benefit from the same cautionary techniques elaborated in the literature. These similarities will be discussed first before moving on to their distinguishing features.

The semi-structured interviews conducted in this investigation can be described as "conversation with a purpose" (Bingham and Moore, 1959, cited in Banister et al, 1994: 51). Further, Mishler's (1986) definition of "an interview as a form of discourse", encapsulates the essence of the research interview:

"(1) interviews are speech events; (2) the discourse of interviews is constructed jointly by interviewers and respondents; (3) analysis and interpretation are based on a theory of discourse and meaning; (4) the meanings of questions and answers are contextually grounded."

(Mishler, 1986: ix)

Mishler's (1986) notion of interviews as speech events is inspired by the development of the following concepts: speech event, speech community, speech act, and speech

activity (Gumperz, 1982; Hymes, 1967). This conception of interviews renders the emergence of meaning crucial, but not only that, the meanings which are constructed are context-bound (Mishler, 1986). The implication of this is that the interviewing scenario itself is as much a part of the data as the words uttered by participants (Burr, 1995). For this reason, a number of factors must be taken seriously throughout the interviewing process. On entering the research interview all parties, i.e. the interviewer and interviewee(s), are communicating with some kind of goal in mind; the interviewer wishes to elicit information about the research topic and the interviewee(s) is attempting to make meaningful the relevant aspects of his/her life. In this sense, the discursive outcome is a negotiation which has been constructed in that particular context. Due to this, diligence is required on the part of the interviewer on two levels, in terms of the wording of questions and the development of an effective communicative relationship.

The interview situation, like the human world generally, is a conversational reality (Kvale, 1996) and conversations have atmospheres (Mair, 1999): everything said and done in an interview has a consequence. Conducting the perfect interview is probably an impossibility, nevertheless, there are procedures which can be followed to facilitate the collection of meaningful data. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer devises a schedule of topics to be discussed beginning each topic with an open-ended question. It is essential that the interviewer does not ask leading questions (Breakwell, 1995; Burgess, 1984) or bias the response by introducing concepts or interpretations not yet mentioned by the interviewee(s). For example, when inquiring about an experience of a film, questions such as, 'did this film shock you?' or 'were you disturbed by this film?' should be avoided. The questions should be open in the sense that any length of response may be given, rather than a simple 'yes' or 'no', and the interviewee should be left to find his/her own expression instead of having one forced upon him/her. More appropriate questions, therefore would be, 'what was your response to this film?' or 'how did this film make you feel?'. This kind of questioning empowers the participant(s), enabling him/her to be honest instead of feeling compelled to fit in with the interviewer's preconceived ideas. In this way, the discursive data obtained through interviewing is "from the lips of the people themselves [. . .] in their own 'unvarnished' language" (Mayhew, 1851, cited in Burgess, 1984: 102). Mishler (1986) stresses that the questions asked should be treated in the same way as the responses, i.e. as texts:

"it is only through knowing what [the interviewer and interviewee] say that we can begin to address the question of what they mean."

(Mishler, 1986: 51)

This is why accurate transcriptions of interviews are necessary (Mishler, 1986). A conversation involves at least two participants and what each says is of primary importance when analysing meanings. Restricting the amount of questions can reduce the possibility of bias, again promoting the use of open-ended questions. The type of transcription adopted depends on the type of analysis implemented. A discussion of the analysis follows in the next section, however, it is opportune to state that it is the meanings of the data which are of significance in this study, rather than the discourse per se. As a result the transcription need not include a detailed representation of linguistic features such as pauses, false starts, and intonation. A limited portrayal of these features are included in the transcription technique to enhance meaning, but are adapted so that they do not detract from the words themselves (the guidelines of transcription are in Appendix 1.1).

The second level on which interviewers must exercise caution through self-monitoring is the establishment of a trusting relationship with the interviewee(s). Each participant must have a clear conception of what is required of them and must feel sufficiently comfortable to divulge information of a personal and sometimes sensitive nature. In short, a rapport must be built up between the interviewer and interviewee(s). Rapport is said to have been achieved when "a basic sense of trust has developed that allows for the free flow of information" (Spradley, 1979: 78). Spradley (1979) elaborates this definition of rapport in the ensuing discussion about ethnographic interviewing. Rapport is described as a four stage process: (1) the initial apprehension felt by all parties can be broken down by introducing experiences relevant to the research topic; (2) these experiences are then explored by revealing the nature of these experiences; (3) by now the participants will have reached a stage of co-operation; and (4) the final stage is that of participation, which may take weeks to develop, but once reached the informant will feel a heightened sense of co-operation and will assume a more assertive role (Spradley, 1979). Although not directly applicable in a study where individual participants are interviewed just once, the basic ideas translate and stress the delicacy and respect with which participants should be treated in human science research.

The work of Carl Rogers (1967, 1951, 1942), particularly in relation to client-centred counselling, influenced Evans, Hearn, Uhlemann and Ivey's (1984) views on rapport in the interviewing situation. Rogers professes the significance of warmth, empathy and positive regard in counselling; in an interviewing scenario this means that the interviewer must be actively listening to the respondent in order to achieve the best understanding possible which, in turn, will facilitate the selection of topics to be discussed, or avoided, as the interview progresses:

"An effective interview can make a tremendous difference in the life of another human being [. . .] poor interviewing can be destructive."

(Evans et al, 1984: 1)

All the above features of interviewing techniques relate to both the individual interviews and the inquiry groups conducted in this investigation. These two types of interviews were selected because of their respective abilities in terms of gathering in-depth information. Semi-structured individual interviews were adopted at the beginning stages of this study because the aim was to reveal the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences of violence. This is best achieved through allowing individuals to talk openly, in confidence (as far as their identities are withheld and informed consent given), about their experiences. The idiosyncratic nature of participants' experiences was of particular importance, hence it was necessary to create a research scenario in which individuals could tell their own stories without the presence of others (excluding the interviewer). In the case of the inquiry groups conducted the discussions concentrated on the experiences of one particular film. Inquiry groups were selected at this later stage of the project firstly, by way of comparing different categories of participant (e.g. by gender), and secondly because the interaction of the group would provide valuable insight into the varying ways in which these participant categories articulate and make meaningful their experiences of a violent film (e.g. in the absence of the opposite gender).

The level of structure implemented in the individual interviews is akin to that in the inquiry groups. Both were guided by a schedule of topics to be covered and involved similar open-ended questions to prompt participants into telling their story. The central difference is the content; experiences of media violence per se, and responses to one example of a violent film, respectively. In both cases, however, wider issues were

covered in depth by some participants. Nowhere in the literature is interviewing described as straightforward, on the contrary, it requires considerable effort from both the interviewer and those being interviewed. However, with practice, a research interview "has the potential of providing rich and highly illuminating material" (Robson, 1993: 299) in the first instance, and in the second, will lead to the expansion of knowledge in the human sciences.

Fundamental in the evaluation of methods executed in any kind of disciplined inquiry is whether or not they meet the criteria of scientific practice. As discussed in the previous section, *3.2 Paradigm*, what has been accepted as science in psychology has been strongly influenced by the natural scientific approach. Despite enduring arguments that psychology should be conceived as a human science (cf. Giorgi, 1994, 1970) and more recent shifts in research practice (e.g. Heron, 1996; Smith, Harré and Van Langenhove, 1995b; Reason and Rowan, 1981), the tools used to test the validity of research methods have remained the same. Those research methods which developed during the natural science era of psychology usually involve measurement, quantification and statistical analysis; the three tenets for testing such methods are validity, reliability and objectivity (e.g. Robson, 1993).

Traditionally, validity related first to measurement and second to experimentation (Reason and Rowan, 1981). The former kind of validity test was designed to clarify that the research methods measured what they were intended to measure. The aim here was to reach some 'true measure', which has since been described as unattainable (Reason and Rowan, 1981). The latter test is divided into two stages; internal validity and external validity. Internal validity aims to test whether or not the experimental treatments made a difference in that particular experiment; external validity tests to what degree the experimental effect can be generalised, i.e. whether the same results would be found by another researcher if variables were manipulated differently or a different population was studied, for instance.

The test of reliability denotes to what extent a research project can be repeated by different researchers and the same results found. This relates to the natural attitude that there is a single objective reality 'out there' to be discovered; it follows that if truth is a fixed concept then a research experiment can only be considered reliable if the same conclusion is drawn again and again. Similarly, the final measure of objectivity, is

concerned with the realist concept of 'truth'. All of the methods adopted in a scientific inquiry must be objective, i.e. lacking bias and subjectivity, in order for them to reveal a true reflection of reality.

The tests of validity, reliability and objectivity have been used to judge whether or not research is scientific to the same extent as the choice of methods in psychological research has been restricted to experimentation. This has posed problems for those psychologists adopting research techniques of a different nature:

"Anyone moving away from studies based on quantitative data is likely to have to face criticism in that the work is unreliable, invalid and generally unworthy of admission into the magic circle of science."

(Robson, 1993: 402)

The difference between traditional methods and those used in human scientific psychological research begins at the epistemological level, as discussed previously in reference to the paradigm. It is not surprising that such a fundamental shift in the conception of reality should result in a different form of test for the validation of research techniques. Instead of revealing the nature of a single reality, hence generalising experiment results to the wider population, human scientific psychology attempts to understand the multifaceted reality of interacting individuals:

"So we have to learn to think dialectically, to view reality as a process, always emerging through a self-contradictory development, always becoming; reality is neither subject nor object, it is both wholly independent of me and wholly dependent on me. This means that any notion of validity must concern itself both with the knower and with what is to be known: valid knowledge is a matter of *relationship*."

(Reason and Rowan, 1981: 241)

Robson (1993) refers to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) proposal of four alternative tests that better fit the nature of research techniques falling within the paradigm of human scientific psychology: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility can be described as the parallel construct to internal validity because it aims to demonstrate that the study was conducted in a way which ensures the subject of the

inquiry was accurately identified and described (Robson, 1993). The open-ended nature of semi-structured interviews is designed specifically to reveal descriptive accounts of participants' experiences, therefore according to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, interviews are a credible method.

Transferability corresponds to external validity (or generalisability). According to Robson (1993), it is the researcher's responsibility to provide sufficient information about the processes adopted in the study, so that other researchers may repeat it if they so wish, however, it is "*not* the task to provide an index of transferability; it is his or her responsibility to provide the *data base* that makes transferability judgements possible on the part of potential appliers" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 316). This notion of transferring the essential components of one research project when conducting another is more applicable to human science research because the assumption of multiple realities, of the unavoidable subjective involvement, and of the negotiated nature of experience, would render an identical replica both impossible and useless. Take for example a scenario where semi-structured interviews are adopted by several researchers investigating the same topic: the procedures taken may be identical, i.e. the use of a schedule, open-ended questions, and the free flow of information, yet the data collected would invariably differ. This is due to the simple fact that different individuals are involved in creating the interview discourse in distinct contexts. Nevertheless, comparable conclusions may be drawn. Although the specifics of individual projects will differ in human science research, the methods used and the conclusions drawn may be transferable.

Dependability is the third criterion suggested (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), which is comparable to reliability in the traditional tests. Robson (1993) states that just as reliability is necessary, but not sufficient, to make a quantitative study valid, dependability is necessary, but not sufficient, for a qualitative study to be credible. It is proposed that triangulation, i.e. the use of several methods or a team of independent analysts, for instance, can be a means of testing dependability.

The final test is that of confirmability, which corresponds to the traditional objectivity test. Confirmability is summarised by Robson (1993) as demonstrating whether or not the investigation informs its readers sufficiently to allow a test of adequacy, both in terms of the processes applied and the closeness of the findings to the data. The

advantage of a strategy influenced by Grounded Theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is that the whole research process is data-driven, i.e. the theory is developed as a direct result of the revelations in the data. Additionally, the method of semi-structured interviewing acts as a window through which peoples' experiences can be read. This material is not translated, for example into numerical form, but is simply categorised into meaningful categories illustrating that the theoretical propositions made remain close to the data:

"The primary strength of new paradigm research, its fundamental claim to being a valid process, is in its emphasis on personal encounter with experience and encounter with persons."

(Reason and Rowan, 1981: 242)

Semi-structured individual interviews and inquiry groups were selected as the methods of data collection adopted in this project due to their affinity with the intention of revealing the intricacies of peoples' experiences of violence in popular film. The meaningful accounts which participants share provide the mechanism through which film violence can be understood within the terms of human scientific psychology.

3.5 Analysis

The fourth decision to be made in planning research is what kind of technique should be employed to make sense of the data, i.e. the method of analysis. The analysis will generally depend upon two factors, the nature of the data and the kinds of answers being sought. Nevertheless, as with the previous decision-making stages in disciplined inquiry the choice of analysis must fit into the entire package, in other words, the processes undertaken must be in accordance with the paradigmatic assumptions made. This can sometimes cause difficulties especially when the paradigm adopted remains on the perimeter of psychology, as does human scientific psychology. However, new tools of analysis are becoming available and at the same time gaining more usage. Accounts of such developments can be found in numerous recent publications (e.g. Polkinghorne, 1988; Smith, Harré and Van Langenhove, 1995a, 1995b; Banister et al, 1994; Edwards and Potter, 1992) which deal with 'new paradigm' techniques, such as discourse analysis, co-operative inquiry, and narrative analysis, to name but a few. The analysis conducted in this project was influenced by both discourse analysis (e.g. Potter and Wetherell, 1987; 1995) and a recent innovation by

Smith and colleagues (Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999; Smith, Osborne, Jarman and de Lacey, 1999), interpretative phenomenological analysis. The following discussion will illustrate that the current analytic tool is not an exact copy of either discourse analysis or interpretative phenomenological analysis, but rather is a blending of the two with added clarifications which are novel to this project.

Smith, Jarman and Osborne (1999) describe interpretative phenomenological analysis by way of the terms in its title:

"the approach is phenomenological in that it is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself. [. . .] Access [to the participant's personal world] depends on, and is complicated by, the researcher's own conceptions and indeed these are required in order to make sense of that other personal world through a process of interpretative activity. Hence the term interpretative phenomenological analysis is used to signal these two facets of the approach."

(Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999: 218-219)

Within their text, *Doing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, Smith, Jarman and Osborne (1999) make a distinction between their analytic approach and that of discourse analysis (e.g. Coyle, 1995; Potter and Wetherell, 1995). Nevertheless, a number of assumptions made in discourse analysis are fundamental to both interpretative phenomenological analysis and the analysis conducted in this study which, in turn, are representative of psychology as a human science.

Discourse analysts promote the argument that language is central to a great majority of human activity and therefore should be a primary focus in social psychology (Potter, 1997; Burr, 1995; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter and Wetherell, 1987) as does human science. Second, reality is considered in a relativist sense to include multiple truths rather than a fixed reality. The relevance of this assumption to language and discourse is illustrated by Potter's (1996) dichotomised metaphors of (1) the mirror and (2) the construction yard. The former suggests that language directly mirrors reality, making descriptions a passive ensemble of words which are considered to be factual

and hence can stand in for the world being described, like a photograph, for instance; the latter proposes that the production of language involves construction both in the sense that descriptive accounts construct the world and that descriptive accounts are themselves constructed. The metaphor of language as a construction yard is preferable in this study's conceptual framework as it is reminiscent of the dialogic relationship between the person and the world that constitutes human experience.

Similarly, the social constructionist notion of objectivity, which Burr (1995) argues is crucial to discourse analysis, supports that assumed in human scientific psychology:

"No human being can step outside of her or his humanity and view the world from no position at all, which is what the idea of objectivity suggests, and this is just as true of scientists as of everyone else."

(Burr, 1995: 160)

Related at a philosophical level to these conceptions of reality is the emphasis discourse analysis places on variation within participant accounts. Traditionally, consensus among participants was considered 'proof' that an event occurred as described (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). The rejection of a realist position in discourse analysis and the promotion of the ideas of social constructionism, however, led to the focus on differences in language use as well as on those aspects which are shared (Burr, 1995; Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In this way, discourse analysts, like human scientists, are interested in the idiosyncrasies within human expression and the ways in which these are combined with culturally shared conventions.

The fundamental difference, however, between a discourse analysis and a human scientific investigation is that discourse analysts are involved in the study of language per se:

"That is, [discourse analysts] are not trying to recover events, beliefs and cognitive processes from participants' discourse, or treat language as an indicator or signpost to some other state of affairs but looking at the analytically prior question of how discourse or accounts of these things are manufactured."

(Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 35)

The objective of discourse analysis, therefore, is to reveal the ways in which discourse is constructed in relation to its function (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Indeed, throughout the literature 'discourse' is defined as a constructive tool which plays an active role in the constitution of social reality (Burr, 1995; Coyle, 1995; Potter and Wetherell, 1995; Edwards and Potter, 1992). This strict emphasis on construction which leans toward determinism, together with the topics of study, such as the social organisation of language, the use of rhetorical devices, and the study of how texts are constructed in order to achieve particular social goals, set this study apart from a discourse analysis. It is this distinction in fact which is made by Smith, Jarman and Osborne (1999):

"While IPA [interpretative phenomenological analysis] shares with discourse analysis (DA) a commitment to the importance of language and qualitative analysis, where IPA researchers would typically differ from discourse analysts is in their perception of the status of cognition. [. . .] Thus, Potter and Wetherell's DA regards verbal reports as behaviours in their own right which should be the focus of functional analyses. IPA by contrast *is* concerned with cognitions, that is, with understanding what the particular respondent thinks or believes about the topic under discussion. Thus, IPA, while recognising that a person's thoughts are not transparently available from, for example, interview transcripts, engages in the analytic process in order, hopefully, to say something about that thinking."

(Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999: 219)

In light of these differences interpretative phenomenological analysis is better suited than discourse analysis to a study which aims to reveal the meanings attached to experiences of film violence. Therefore the analysis in this project is considered to be an adaptation of interpretative phenomenological analysis.

The business of doing interpretative phenomenological analysis focuses on detailed multiple readings of the corpus, which in this case constitutes transcripts of both individual interviews and inquiry groups, and with discerning patterns within it. The analysis as a whole is divided into a number of stages which may vary according to the type of project (Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999). Two such approaches are explained at length in Smith, Jarman and Osborne's (1999) text, *Doing Interpretative*

Phenomenological Analysis: (1) the idiographic case study approach and (2) the exploration and theorising of shared themes. The method adopted in this research is an amalgamation of these two approaches with further developments added. Therefore the analysis in this project is best described as third variation of interpretative phenomenological analysis. What follows is a stage by stage account of the analytic processes conducted in this study.

Stage 1: Initial Reading and Note Making

The first stage of analysis entails thorough readings of the corpus with the initial intention of becoming familiar with the data. If the researcher immerses him/herself within the data as much as possible it will facilitate the analytic tasks ahead. Interpretative phenomenological analysis requires active reading; throughout the analysis the researcher must be alert to the available meanings of the participants' discourse. During the initial reading of the transcripts preliminary notes about the participants' accounts are made. In this project each stage was completed with the whole sample before going on to the next, as in Smith, Jarman and Osborne's (1999) second approach of exploring shared themes.

Stage 2: Identifying Themes

The next stage is to re-read the transcripts and, bearing in mind the notes made previously, to illuminate themes which run across the sample, this is comparable to Smith, Jarman and Osborne's (1999) stage of "initial coding" in the exploration of shared themes. In their description of interpretative phenomenological analysis, however, Smith, Jarman and Osborne (1999) tend to use the terms "theme" and "code" almost interchangeably. In this third variation of interpretative phenomenological analysis themes and codes are distinct entities, the reasons for this will become clear as the account progresses. The themes which become apparent within each individual transcript and across the corpus as a whole are simply a collection of similar ideas, beliefs, descriptions, or opinions expressed by participants. For instance, in this project there may be a theme which includes participants' ideas about the definition of violence, or which comprises the emotional reactions to violence recounted by participants. The definition of a "theme" adopted in this project therefore is a collection of data which is made up of initial groupings of subjective material taken directly from the corpus. The result is a series of collections each of which is given a heading (normally using words from the corpus, such as "violence", "disturbing", and

"enjoyment") and consists of transcript extracts. It is this thematic data which is utilised in the subsequent stages of analysis. The aim of highlighting themes within the data is to organise it into a manageable and interpretable accumulation of speech. Multiple interviews and inquiry groups of approximately one hour in length create data in abundance which can be overwhelming if not managed well in the early stages of analysis.

Stage 3: Organising Themes

The themes must then be read in detail in order to surmise what it is that participants are saying. For example, to resolve how violence is defined, how emotions are described, and what affect these have in terms of participants' experiencing of violence. This stage involves more interpretative work than those previously conducted in that it requires the analyst to group themes together in terms of their significance, both to the participants' discourse and to the research question(s). Smith, Jarman and Osborne (1999) include this procedure in their idiographic, case study approach, stating that once the original themes are clustered in this way super-ordinate themes are nominated. However, in the idiographic approach to interpretative phenomenological analysis this is the penultimate stage of analysis, followed only by the write up of a report. That is not the case in this instance.

Stage 4: Coding

Coding the thematic data is the next stage undertaken in the analysis adopted in this project. Smith, Jarman and Osbrone (1999) include a coding stage in their exploration of shared themes approach to interpretative phenomenological analysis, however, the process described there is not dissimilar to the organisation of themes in this analysis. This illustrates their non-specific use of the terms "theme" and "code". In Smith, Jarman and Osborne's (1999) stages of "initial coding" and "identifying shared themes" (which are to be completed in that order) it is the identification of themes which is the goal. Thus, the product of analysis, bar the write-up stage, is a series of super-ordinate themes. By contrast, in this project the "code" has a different status to the "theme". A "code" in this adaptation of interpretative phenomenological analysis is defined as a shared entity which is universal insofar as it is available to everyone, although it is unlikely that everyone will adopt the same code to represent their individual experience. Peoples' experience of violence is unique because it is an idiosyncratic mix

of the personal (which is not shared) and the world (which is shared). Hence, a code represents the phenomenology of experiencing of violence.

The process of coding in this project, then, involves further interpretative analysis of the themes. By now the analyst should be extremely familiar with the data and therefore should be aware of the implicit messages it holds as regards the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher must now re-read the thematic data which has been organised into meaningful groups with a different goal. Coding does not simply continue to identify similarities but is ultimately concerned with revealing the essence of, in this case, participants' experiencing of violence. This is achieved through making interpretations about what each theme means in terms of the research questions and what has emerged in the process thus far. For instance, the themes of "shock", "disturbance", and "upset" may include passages which relate to participants' disbelief and inability to understand the violence which they have encountered. These extracts may then be collected together to make a code of "lack of understanding". Another case may be related to participants' definitions of film violence, for example. The theme of violence may include a number of extracts which define violence as "exciting" and "amusing", which may be grouped together in the code of "positive emotions". It is extremely likely that the same extract will appear in several codes as there will undoubtedly be some overlap in this conceptualisation process. The result of this stage will be a series of codes each with a number of extracts representing them. In short, the coding stage is in the business of further breaking down and interpreting the data into meaningful expositions of what violence means and how participants experience it.

Stage 5: Writing Up

The final stage of the analysis in this project, as in Smith, Jarman and Osborne's (1999) account of interpretative phenomenological analysis, is writing it up. The written report is essentially a narrative account which is based upon the codes established. It will include sufficient extracts from the data to illustrate the significance of each code and what it means in terms of how individuals experience violence via the medium of popular film.

The analysis adopted in this project therefore is just one reading of interpretative phenomenological analysis. The definitions of "theme" and "code" utilised in this project

are essential in both the processes undertaken and the result of the analytic process, as will become clear in the following chapters which include the studies conducted. Additionally, this method of analysis is in keeping with both the paradigmatic assumptions of human scientific psychology because it emphasises meanings, interpretation and the understanding of participants' experiences. On top of this, the participants' voice is given priority in the conclusions made through its commitment to let the data speak. This means that it is in alignment with the strategic decisions made because the theoretical reading of the experiencing of violence comes directly from the data gathered rather than from predetermined notions. In this sense, interpretative phenomenological analysis can be described as a new method of analysis for a new paradigm.

Throughout the methodological texts addressing 'new paradigm' techniques such as interpretative phenomenological analysis, there are cautionary remarks about how time consuming and demanding they are, such as this one:

"However systematically a qualitative method is presented, the crucial part of the analysis remains the particular interpretative analysis the investigator brings to the text. That makes doing qualitative research difficult and demanding. It is also what makes it creative, exciting and, ultimately, marks its potential to make a significant and distinctive contribution to [. . .] psychology."

(Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999: 238)

In short, the apparent limitations within 'new paradigm', or qualitative, research methods are better defined as problems inherent in the traditions of positivism and quantitative research. It is the short-sightedness of these traditional approaches which is defensive against the radical changes implemented by researchers who conceive psychology as a human science. However, such changes are crucial to the advancement of scientific knowledge in psychology.

3.6 Ethics

When designing this type of research project there are a number of ethical considerations to be taken into account. These include obtaining consent from participants, respecting their confidentiality, and ensuring that no harm comes to them

during the research, once it is published, and in their future lives. Participants must be aware of what is required of them if they are to feel sufficiently relaxed to share their personal experiences. Therefore, if individual interviews and inquiry groups are the methods of data collection it is necessary to inform participants what the subject matter of the discussion will be, how it will proceed, how the data will be used in the final report and that they will remain anonymous. When participants are happy about these conditions they are able to offer informed consent for the interview to go ahead.

In this project participants' wishes were respected throughout the research scenario, that is, if at any moment during the interview or inquiry group a participant felt uneasy in answering a question or they requested the termination of the discussion they were made to feel comfortable in doing so. Once the discussion was complete participants were made aware that they had the right to withdraw their data from the study if that was their will. Each of these steps ensure that any data which appears in the report was included with the participants' consent.

The confidentiality of participants was respected in this project by excluding any information by which they could be identified. Throughout the body of the report participants were not referred to by name. Instead each was assigned a number, e.g. P1, P2 etc.. Equally, in the appendices (Appendices 2.5, 3.2, 4.4, and 5.3) where participants' personal information was included care was taken to avoid the inclusion of information which may identify them. Taking these cautionary steps acts as a safeguard to maintain participants' confidentiality.

Protecting participants against harm may be considered an inherent characteristic of human scientific psychology. Indeed it is. However, as in any other type of research project, measures must be taken to ensure that participants are treated well and that they do not experience any negative effects through offering themselves as participants. In this project many participants were asked to share their experiences of violence in real life. Due to the unpleasant and sometimes distressing nature of these experiences, special care was taken to conduct the interviews in a sensitive manner. This was also an issue in approaching prospective participants. When inviting people for a research interview a concerted effort was made to reassure them that the interview would be confidential and that they must only participate if that was their wish, rather than feeling compelled to do so (copies of the letters sent to prospective

participants in Study 1 are included in Appendices 2.3 and 2.5). Similarly, in Study 3, where clips from a violent film were shown to participants, special care was required. Participants were told what the nature of the clips was going to be and that they could leave at any time if they found them disturbing or offensive. *This was especially* important if the members of the inquiry group had not previously seen the film from which these clips were taken. The subject matter of this research is experiencing violent film, therefore the clips used in Study 3 included scenes of violence which may be particularly shocking when seen out of the context of the film as a whole. Making participants aware of what the research interview or inquiry group was going to entail and that they need not speak of anything which would cause them distress, informing them that they could leave at any moment or withdraw their data if that was their will, and ensuring that they would remain anonymous in the report each contribute to avoiding causing them any harm during the research, once it is published, and in the future.

Good research practice also demands that participants are debriefed immediately after the data collection process and that the researcher makes time to talk with participants about their experience of being interviewed if requested. Participants should be happy for their data to be included in the study and be given the opportunity to offer feedback to the researcher. Making the effort to achieve these goals will result in a genuine and pleasant research encounter for both the participant and the researcher.

3.7 Summary

To summarise, the paradigm within which this research falls is human scientific psychology. It is this paradigm and the assumptions inherent within it which direct the remainder of methodological decisions made. The strategy employed is exploratory and data-driven, allowing a series of studies which narrow in terms of their focus but are expanded in terms of theoretical insight evolving through the data. The methods selected are semi-structured individual interviews and inquiry groups, and the analysis conducted is an adaptation of interpretative phenomenological analysis.

In short, the methodological decisions made in this project constitute a radical shift from the mainstream studies conducted in the domain of media violence. As Chapter 2 revealed the majority of existing research into media violence was conducted within the paradigm of psychology as a natural science. This is evident in the designs

implemented in the studies. Although developments were made, in the shape of experimental field studies and correlation studies, these investigations maintained the traditional positivist values of laboratory experiments. The implications of this natural attitude are that predetermined notions of what constitutes 'violence' and that exposure to media violence is harmful guided the path taken by researchers. Further, the language used by researchers, i.e. that people are 'exposed to' media violence, assumes that individuals are unwillingly confronted with violence in film and on television and that they would therefore welcome the decision to expel violence from the mass media. In making these assumptions the possibility that individuals enjoy watching films which contain representations of violence was systematically ignored and no effort was made to understand what film violence means to its viewers. Addressing these crucial issues which have regrettably been missing in previous psychological research into media violence is one of the major objectives in this research project.

The recurring theme throughout this thesis is change. The previous chapter served as a critical evaluation of past research customs and findings; this chapter, through the epistemological and conceptual decisions made and their pragmatic implications, has illustrated that the understanding of the enigma that is media violence depends upon the remodelling of psychology as a human science. This is not so much a re-invention as a re-visiting. The assumptions made in this project date back to the nineteenth century, yet for various reasons, philosophical and political, the tools required to put these theories into practice have only recently come to the fore. Consequently, the chapters that follow present a series of original studies which mesh together established philosophies, a controversial topic which has been studied extensively in both psychology and mass communications research, and a new methodology which promises to heighten scientific understanding of this crucially human phenomenon.

At this stage it will be useful to reiterate the questions posed in this project in order to contextualise the studies that follow in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. The research questions asked at the beginning of this thesis were:

- ♦ How do individuals conceive violence and what definitions do they employ?
- ♦ What meanings do individuals attribute to representations of violence in the visual media?

- ♦ What is the nature of experiencing violence vicariously via the medium of popular film?
- ♦ What do individuals gain from experiencing violence vicariously via the medium of popular film?

The first study in this project, *Study 1: Experiencing Violence*, which is presented in Chapter 4, constitutes an introductory exploration of how violence is defined and experienced. As such this study will focus upon the first research question concerning individuals' conceptualisations of violence. In addition, it will begin the complex procedure of revealing the meanings which individuals attach to their experiences of violence. However, this second question will be explored in more depth in the next study, *Study 2: Meanings of Violence*, in Chapter 5. Study 2 will also return to the first question in order to elaborate upon the findings of Study 1 as well as addressing the third question regarding the nature of individuals' experiencing of violence vicariously through the channel of popular film. The final study in Chapter 6, *Study 3: The Contextualisation of Film Violence*, will focus upon discovering the nature of experiencing violence vicariously via film in order to develop the findings of the previous studies. Additionally, Study 3 will explore the issues of what is gained through the activity of experiencing violence vicariously, therefore fulfilling the objective set out in the fourth research question. In short, the combination of these three studies will attempt to find answers for each of these questions in order to provide a greater understanding of individuals' experiencing of violence vicariously.

Study 1: Experiencing Violence

4.1 Introduction

The topic of this chapter is the first study to be conducted in a series of three. Study 1 is essentially an open exploration of the phenomenon under investigation, i.e. violence experienced via the medium of popular film. However, in order to conduct such a task successfully the inquiry must be far reaching in scope; to discover the nature of experiencing film violence it is necessary also in the preliminary stages to study the experience of violence per se. Consequently, the issues investigated in this introductory study include responses to both representations of violence in film and encounters with violence in real life.

Hence, the focus of Study 1 is two fold: to examine individuals' experiences of violence via the visual media together with their encounters with violence directly in real life. Initially the phenomenon of violence is to be explored through determining the ways in which individuals define violence, both when it occurs on film and in real life, followed by an analysis of the experiences themselves. The inclusion of real life violent events in a study concerned with violence in the visual media requires further explanation. A great majority of previous studies on media violence have hypothesised that watching violence in film or on television is causally linked to violent conduct in society (as discussed in Chapter 2), in other words, that viewers of violent media will become violent in real life. This position is known as the effects model. However, in the main, effects studies do not make any attempt to determine the nature of the two phenomena between which they are quick to propose a causal relation. The effects model blindly connects exposure to media violence with violent behaviour whilst lacking the commitment to discern the qualities and meanings attached to each. Therefore, it is the quest of this study to explore the nature of violence experienced both via film and directly in real life in order to establish the similarities and differences between them.

This objective is to be accomplished through a number of means. Firstly, Study 1 will be concerned with revealing the emotions experienced when confronted with violence, either in film or in real life. Secondly, the objective is to examine the ways in which individuals deal with their experiences of violence. This will be achieved through

establishing how violence is defined by those who have experienced it; revealing how participants discursively construct meanings of their experiences of violence; and determining the range of mechanisms implemented to rationalise these experiences. In short, Study 1 aims to explore the ways in which individuals experience violence.

Study 1 comprises two parts which are discussed in succession: *Study 1a: Experiencing Violence Questionnaire* and *Study 1b: Experiencing Violence Interviews*. The first part of this study was designed with two goals in mind: to gain a preliminary understanding of individuals' experiences of violence, with a particular focus on the ways in which they define violence, and to solicit participants for the second, more detailed phase. Both Study 1a and Study 1b are divided into sections detailing the research questions, the design implemented, and the analyses conducted. Finally a summary of the findings in Study 1 as a whole will be offered.

4.2 Study 1a: Experiencing Violence Questionnaire

Research Questions

The focus of Study 1a is to explore the ways in which individuals experience violence, both when it occurs in real life and when it is experienced receptively via the medium of film. Additionally, this first phase of data collection intends to reveal how violence is defined by those who have experienced it. The research questions posed in Study 1a are:

- ♦ How is violence defined by those who have experienced it?
- ♦ How is violence experienced via the medium of popular film?
- ♦ How is violence experienced in real life?

Throughout this study two objectives are crucial: to elicit data which will guide the design of Study 1b and to invite individuals who have experienced violence to take part in a research interview.

Design

(i) Method

The method of data collection in Study 1a is a questionnaire. A questionnaire was selected because it provides a route through which people can be approached requiring limited commitment from participants. Caution was taken because of the sensitivity of dealing with experiences of real life violence. There was no obligation, in the first place,

to complete the questionnaire, and in the second, to take participation in the research further. At the end of the questionnaire there is an invitation to contact the researcher to be interviewed if the participant wishes. The content of the questionnaire served to introduce participants to the nature of this research project through probing their experiences and beliefs in a way that would give them an impression of what would occur in an interview situation.

(ii) Materials

The questionnaire comprises four sections: Section A: Your experiences of violence, Section B: Your opinions about violence, Section C: Your opinions about violence in the media, and Section D: About you. A copy of this questionnaire is in Appendix 2.1. Section A asked questions about participants' personal encounters with violence in real life; Section B aimed to reveal beliefs about the nature of violence, i.e. how it can be defined; the types of television programmes and films, reactions to them, and ideas about violence in the media generally, were the subject of Section C; and Section D requests demographic information (excluding name and contact details). Within Section D is an invitation to contact the researcher if the participant wishes to participate in an interview.

Distributed with the questionnaire was a reply slip and two stamped addressed envelopes. The reply slip can be found in Appendix 2.2. If the participant accepted the invitation to be interviewed they were asked to fill in the reply slip (requesting a contact name, address and telephone number) and return it either with the completed questionnaire, or separately if they wished their questionnaire responses to remain anonymous.

(iii) Participants

There are twenty-six participants in Study 1a, whose details are in Appendix 2.5. The participants are referred to as P1, P2 etc.. Five participants were contacted through the Leicester Victims of Crime Support Scheme (LVCSS), eleven through De Montfort University in Leicester, and ten by word of mouth.

(iv) Procedure

The LVCSS office was contacted in the initial stages of this study in order to request assistance in locating people to take part. This enabled the researcher to be put in

contact with individuals who had been victims of violence, either directly or as a witness. LVCSS accepted and as a result both the questionnaire and the researcher's covering letter outlining the nature of the project (the researcher's covering letter to LVCSS clients is in Appendix 2.3), were devised in collaboration with their representatives. LVCSS distributed a package to fifty of their clients including a letter from them (in Appendix 2.4), a letter from the researcher, a questionnaire, a reply slip and two stamped addressed envelopes.

In addition, a number of questionnaire packages were sent to students and administrative staff at De Montfort University in Leicester. The decision to invite university students to take part in this project was made because those films which inspired this project, such as *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction* and *Natural Born Killers*, are popular with young audiences. The administrative staff at the university were also targeted in order to access a different age group.

One hundred questionnaires were distributed in total and twenty-six were returned. Once all the completed questionnaires were received, those who accepted the invitation to be interviewed were contacted and a time and place for interview was arranged.

Analysis

For the analysis of Study 1a to be possible, it was necessary to record the questionnaire responses given by participants; these were organised by section and duplicated word for word. The resulting data, therefore, comprises four parts: responses to Section A which were titled *Real Life Violence*; Section B, *Definitions of Violence*; Section C, which includes responses about *Film and Television Violence*; and Section D, *Participant Information*. The subsequent analysis was arranged around these four components of data. The nature of data received in a questionnaire study is limited in scope because of the lack of space in which participants can express themselves. Due to this, the data gained is concise, sometimes in note form. For the purpose of this exploratory study, however, it is sufficient to achieve a preliminary understanding of the issues at stake concerning the experiencing of violence. Nevertheless, the analysis which follows was completed with these restrictions in mind and should therefore be treated simply as the building blocks upon which the succeeding studies are laid.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis, as outlined in Chapter 3, comprises the main tool of analysis, however, due to the restrictions of dealing with questionnaire data a content analysis was also conducted in order to gain an understanding of the range of responses obtained. The content analyses simply reveal the frequency of certain words or phrases within the corpus. Conducting two kinds of analysis in this way exemplifies the efforts made to assure the dependability of the study. These methods are implemented in the analysis of both real life encounters with violence and experiences of representations of violence in the visual media.

The procedure undertaken in the interpretative phenomenological analyses of real life and of media violence follows that described in Chapter 3. Five stages of analysis occur: initial reading and note making; identifying themes; organising themes; coding; and writing up. The write up of the analysis, which is what follows, focuses upon the fourth stage and is therefore organised around the codes which were established during the analytic process. Due to the broad range of topics in the questionnaire and the limited depth of responses these codes are numerous and simplistic.

(i) Real Life Violence

In this first section of the questionnaire participants were invited to describe an experience in their personal life which they considered to be violent. The events described range from witnessing a fight either between strangers or people known to the participants in the street or in a public house, being threatened with a gun or a base ball bat, to the on-going verbal and physical abuse of a domestic violence situation and the long term professional experience of an ex-police officer. Eighteen participants recounted such an experience.

A content analysis was conducted which primarily reveals the emotions most frequently expressed by those participants who have experienced violence in real life, depicted in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Frequency of Emotions and Consequences Expressed in Response to Violence in Real Life (Study 1a)

Emotion or Consequence	Number of Participants
Anger	6
Sick	6
Disbelief	4
Sadness	4
Shock	4
Disgust	3
Fear	3
Not as outgoing and carefree	3
Shaky	3
Don't trust anybody	2
Helpless	2
Scared	2
Terrified	2
Will walk away/leave a violent situation	2
Won't go out alone	2
Anxiety	1
Anxious even to hear an argument	1
Apprehensive	1
Be less scared	1
Be more assertive	1
Concern	1
Defensive	1
Distance myself	1
Frustration	1
Had to go on anti-depressants	1
Hate	1
It brought back memories	1
It stayed with me	1
Powerless	1
Upset	1
Lack of comprehension	1
Loath violence especially mental abuse	1
Make myself less sensitive	1
More aware	1
More suspicious	1
Nervous	1
Numb	1
Paranoid	1
Pissed off	1
Protect myself physically and mentally	1
Regret	1
Relief when the police arrived	1
Resentment	1
Sheer dread	1
Terrified of being alone	1
Thankful when it was over	1
Total blind panic	1
Worry	1

As the content analysis shows "anger" and feeling "sick" are the emotions expressed by the largest number of participants who described a real life violent experience. These, together with "shock" and "shaky", signify the intensity and physicality of reactions to violence. The use of words such as "sadness", "disgust", and "fear", characterise the unpleasantness of experiencing violence in real life. The repeated appearance of "disbelief" in the questionnaire responses indicates an inability to comprehend the occurrence of violence and the motivation behind it; indeed one participant stated that the response to violence was a "lack of comprehension". "Helplessness" and "powerless" reflect a similar level of confusion, i.e. of not knowing what to do and feeling incapable of doing anything, in reaction to real life violence. Again the intensity of responses to violence is illustrated by participants' use of words such as "total blind panic", "sheer dread", "numb", and "hate".

The three entries, "not as carefree", "won't go out alone" and "don't trust anybody", reveal the consequences which prevail after the actual event has passed. Some participants, however, suggest that there can be positive consequences of being submitted to violence through their commitment to make changes in their lives. For instance, two participants state that they will "be more assertive" in the future; another feels "more aware" as a result, and to "be less scared", to "distance myself" and to "protect myself both physically and mentally" are commitments made by three others.

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of responses are each mentioned by just one participant. This is an example of the lack of depth available in questionnaire data, nevertheless, the aim of Study 1a is simply to explore the area in order to gain insight for the next phase. Hence, the numbers of participants referring to particular examples are not as beneficial for the purpose of this study as the range of responses given. However, it is highly probable that if the sample were doubled or even trebled similar results would be found for the very reason that experiencing real life violence is a unique process, particularly in terms of the emotional response it provokes in individuals. Additionally, the variety in responses demonstrates that Study 1a is credible, that is, it has achieved its aim to explore individuals' experiences of violence in an open manner. It is this breadth of data which leads directly to the first stages of the interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Jarman, and Osborne, 1999).

The kinds of emotions felt at the time of the violent event described, and subsequent to it, were organised into a set of themes. This process of identifying themes results in a series of data extracts under appropriate headings. The themes identified are: anguish, immediate consequence, long term consequence, passion, recovery, relief, shock, and trauma. These themes are accumulations of similar descriptions, responses to, and beliefs about violence in real life. The number of themes is not predetermined in any way but is dependent upon the data obtained. Having read the corpus thoroughly the researcher becomes aware of similarities within participants' responses as well as extracts which are pertinent to the research questions which are then grouped together as themes.

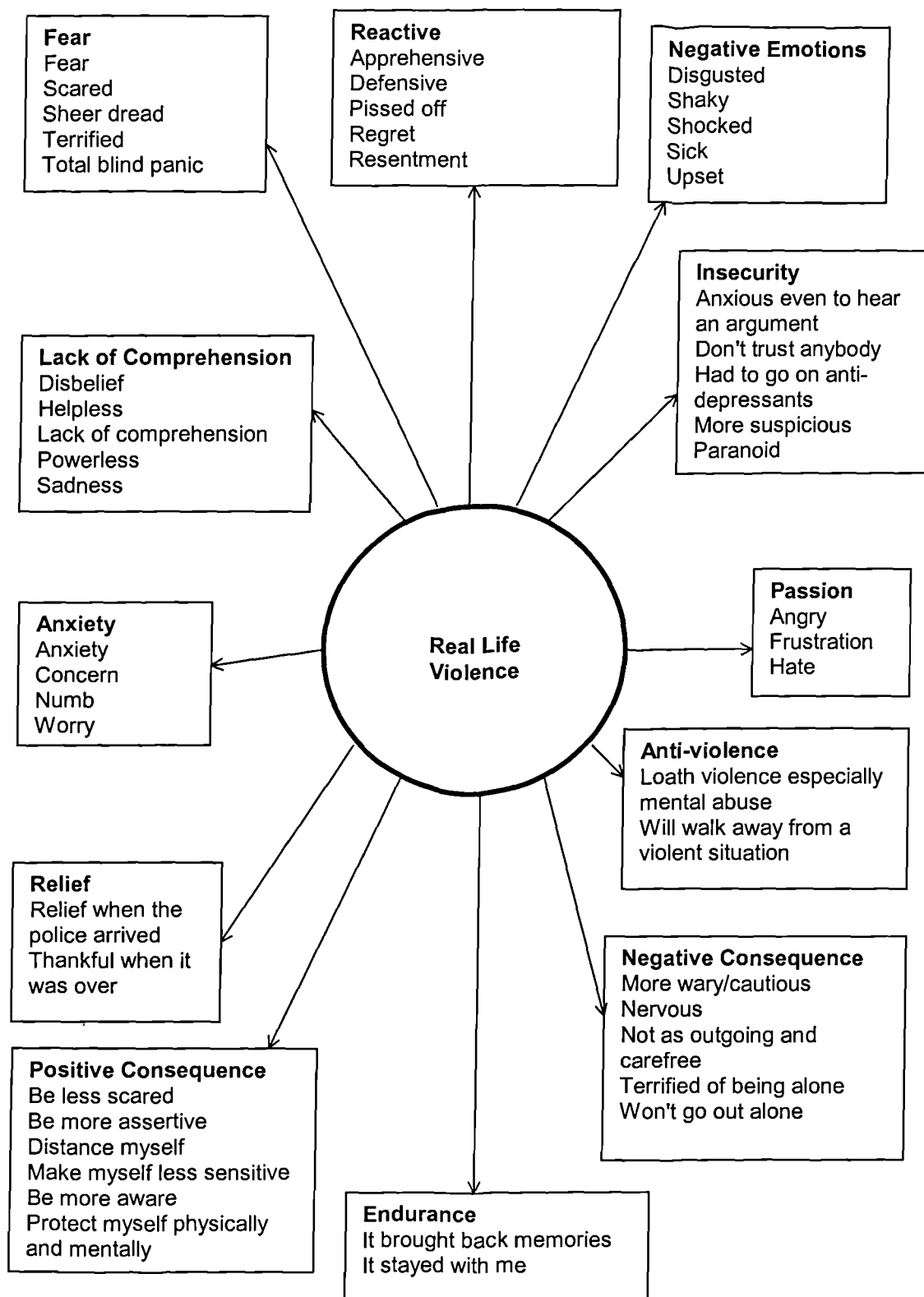
The trauma and shock themes include emotions such as "fear" (Ps 4, 10, 13, 16), "disbelief" (Ps 4, 10, 13), "nausea" (Ps 3, 9, 13), "total blind panic" (P4), "shaky" (Ps 1, 4, 13) and "lack of understanding" (Ps 13, 17). The passion theme includes feelings of "anger" (Ps 4, 7, 8, 9, 15, 20, 16), being "mad" (P1), "resentment" (P11), and "frustration" (P12). Participants referred to the immediate consequences of violence, such as feeling "exhausted" (P11), "isolated" (P12), and "helpless" (P8). These are compared to long term consequences which illustrate the endurance of experiencing violence in real life. The anguish expressed by participants in this study is reflected by sentiments such as a loathing of violence "especially mental abuse" (P11), "how can people be so cruel" (P17), and being "suspicious of others" (P10). Others express yet more extreme results of their encounter with violence in real life, for instance, one participant (P4) is "terrified of being alone", does not go out, and is "very nervous", while another is "paranoid" (P3).

The overall picture gained at this stage is of the severity of violent experiences and the difficulties participants have when dealing with them. In order to understand more fully the scope of participants' responses to violence in real life, this thematic data was subjected to further analysis. The themes were then organised into meaningful thematic groupings, this is the third stage of analysis. For instance, the themes of anguish, shock, and trauma represent similarly negative responses to violence and so became one of the groupings, while immediate consequence and long term consequence form another. Once a set of thematic groupings has been developed the fourth stage of coding begins.

Coding is achieved through a categorisation process, the result of which signifies the components of data that are found to reveal the nature of experiencing violence in real life. The codes, therefore, represent the variety of ways in which participants attach meanings to their experiences of violence. Twelve codes were elicited which are shown in Diagram 4.1 together with examples taken from the questionnaire scripts. The number of codes which may be found is not fixed, for example another analyst may elicit eleven or fifteen codes. However, the amount of codes is informative in that it discloses the range of means available to participants when articulating their experiencing of violence. Each code has equal status because rather than there being a right way and a wrong way of experiencing violence there are simply different ways, as illustrated in Diagram 4.1.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis conducted in Study 1a is limited due to the restrictions inherent in questionnaire data. However, the codes established are sufficient to make assertions about the phenomenon of violence in real life. The majority of codes uncovered reflect the unpleasantness of violence. The codes of negative emotions and of fear confirm everyday expectations about reactions to violence. The code of fear was separated from the umbrella code of negative emotions because the questionnaire data revealed the significance of being afraid in response to the actions of another human being. Fear is not a usual emotion in the mundane existence of day-to-day life so to discover that violence can evoke such an intense reaction is clearly crucial in a study which is attempting to understand the meanings and consequences of experiencing violence in real life. Taking this one step further the passion code demonstrates that violence can make an individual go beyond the reactions of apprehension and defensiveness, included in the reactive code, to the vehement reactions of anger, frustration and hate. Violence in real life does not simply wash over its victims, it withstands time, represented in the endurance code; the codes of anxiety and insecurity reveal the kinds of emotions that persist. Similarly, the negative consequence code shows that in some cases, being subjected to violence can affect everyday living, sometimes severely. The code of relief again emphasises the unpleasantness of violence through the participants' desire for it to end. Also the anti-violence code reflects a strong opposition to violence by those who have experienced it.

Diagram 4.1: Codes of Real Life Violence (Study 1a)



Two codes were not expected in the same way as those above: the lack of comprehension code and the positive consequence code. The former includes reactions of disbelief and sadness, illustrating the participants' struggle to come to terms with the occurrence of violence. The emotions of powerlessness and helplessness suggest that participants would have liked to have acted positively, i.e. to have stopped the violent behaviour, but were prevented by a feeling of impotence. The latter is somewhat different. The positive consequence code shows that some participants adopted the position that something good could be rendered from their experience of violence. The commitments made to be less scared, more aware, assertive and to learn to protect themselves, reflect the development of coping strategies of which these participants would have been ignorant without having experienced violence in real life. In this sense, then, although most individuals would not choose to be subjected to violence in real life, if they are and they survive it, knowledge can be gained which will assist in the future when confronted by similarly harrowing experiences.

(ii) Definitions of Violence

Section B of the questionnaire deals with participants' beliefs about what constitutes violence. The term 'violence' is used copiously in both scientific and popular debates and publications, yet it remains unclear what violence actually is. It is generally assumed that people have a common conception of violence, i.e. that it is an act of aggression between two or more people which results in physical injury, psychological pain, or death (e.g. Harris, 1999; Baron and Byrne, 1994; Gerbner et al, 1980). The analysis which follows, however, will show that as individuals the participants in this study reveal a range of ideas about the nature of violence.

This section of the questionnaire includes two parts: one asks questions requiring a yes or no answer, and the second invites participants to choose which was "more violent" between two violent acts. What follows is a break down of each of these two types of questions.

The questions asked in this section of the questionnaire were devised in order to determine whether or not participants would offer definitions of violence which reflect popular conceptions. For instance, it is commonly understood that being violent is equated with being powerful, that violence involves more than one person, that

violence is a physical entity, and that sport is violent. The questions in Table 4.2 therefore attempt to establish whether or not these assumptions are confirmed in participants' accounts. There are problems with asking such questions in the context of a questionnaire, however. For example, there is no room for further explanation on the behalf of the researcher and the participants are given no space for elaboration. Due to this and the potential to bias the results, usually these kinds of suggestive questions would be avoided in a human scientific investigation and in the subsequent sages of this project indeed they are. Nevertheless, the function of Section B was to confront the cultural ideology of violence by presenting participants with a choice of either conforming to it or rejecting it. This being the case, asking participants whether or not they believed that a violent person is a powerful person is unproblematic in terms of how 'powerful' is interpreted. Although these concepts are multi-dimensional in terms of meaning, whether or not a participant is buying into the dominant interpretative repertoire of violence will be revealed in their acceptance or rejection of the constructs offered in this section of the questionnaire.

The percentages in Table 4.2 show that commonality exists amongst the participants in this study regarding the nature of violence. However, the simple fact that none of these questions have one hundred percent confirmation or rejection indicates the differences in opinion. Responses to the first question reveal that 58% of participants believe that to be violent is not equated with power over others. This defies the assumption usually drawn that violence begets power and therefore reveals a dissonant voice in terms of the conceptualisation of violence in contemporary culture. In fact, the majority of this data goes against the expected perception of violence. For instance, 85% of those who responded state that it is possible for a person to be violent when alone, rejecting the idea that violence must be an act that occurs between two or more people. Similarly, 77% believe that violence need not involve physical actions and 85% that violence does not always result in physical injury. These answers stress the non-physical aspects of violence, both in terms of the violent event and the consequences of it. Supporting this notion, 88% of participants agree that words can be violent. Those responses relating to sporting activities illustrate that participants in this study believe that violence can be experienced as a spectator (58%) as well as an actor (73%). Comparably, 65% declare that watching a film can be construed as violent. This demonstrates that when an individual is watching a violent event, be it a football match or a film, it is not simply the spectacle which is violent but the act of watching it which is

Table 4.2: The Nature of Violence (Study 1a)

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not answered (%)
Is a violent person a powerful person?	8 (31%)	15 (58%)	3 (11%)
Can a person be violent when they are alone?	22 (85%)	3 (11%)	1 (4%)
Can watching a film be violent?	17 (65%)	8 (31%)	1 (4%)
Can words be violent?	23 (88%)	2 (8%)	1 (4%)
Can watching a football match be violent?	15 (58%)	9 (34%)	2 (8%)
Is taking part in a boxing match violent?	19 (73%)	5 (19%)	2 (8%)
Does violence have to involve physical actions?	5 (19%)	20 (77%)	1 (4%)
Must violence end in physical injury?	3 (11%)	22 (85%)	1 (4%)

also considered to be a form of violence. These findings are crucial in that they reveal that not everyone is in agreement with the dominant definitions of violence that circulate both the scientific and public domains of Western culture.

Table 4.3: Levels of Violence (Study 1a)

Which is More Violent?	Number of Participants (%)	Not answered (%)
Punching in the head. Kicking someone in the chest.	1 (4%) 23 (88%)	2 (8%)
Hitting someone in the chest with a baseball bat. Holding a knife to someone's throat in a threatening manner.	9 (35%) 16 (61%)	1 (4%)
Throwing a chair at someone. Breaking a glass over someone's head.	3 (12%) 23 (88%)	0
Slashing someone's face with a knife. Holding a loaded gun to someone's head.	17 (65%) 9 (35%)	0
Stabbing someone in the chest several times. Holding someone's head under water so they cannot breathe.	11 (42%) 6 (23%)	9 (35%)
Shooting someone dead in the chest. Cutting off someone's head with a sword.	2 (8%) 23 (88%)	1 (4%)

The choices offered to participants, depicted in Table 4.3, were devised to characterise the nature of representations of violence portrayed in popular film. For example many films include shooting scenes, fist fights and stabbings. These options also aim to determine whether or not participants construe violent acts differently if they involve a weapon of some kind, like a base ball bat, a gun, or a glass. In addition, the objective of these choices was to ascertain whether or not there are differences in the ways that participants interpret actual acts of violence and threats of violence.

The percentages shown in Table 4.3 therefore reveal the range of judgements participants make about the severity of certain violent acts. The first example resulted in 88% deciding that kicking someone in the chest is more violent than punching someone in the head. This may be because in order to be able to kick someone in the chest that person would usually already have to have been knocked to the floor and would be somewhat defenceless. The remainder of choices include one alternative involving a blade of some kind and it is this option which, consistently, is selected as the most violent. This suggests a fear of cutting. For instance, 65% stated that slashing someone's face with a knife is more violent than holding a loaded gun to someone's head. The reason for this choice may be that holding a gun to someone's head is a threat rather than an act. Having said that, 61% chose holding a knife to someone's throat in a threatening manner as more violent than hitting someone in the chest with a baseball bat. In this case, it is the threat, using a knife, which is considered more violent than a physical assault. Similarly, in the final two options where the physical outcome is death, or likely to be death, the stabbing is chosen to be more violent than drowning, and beheading someone with a sword rather than a shooting. The reasons for these choices may be due to the fact that knives are a household object; it is probable that the participants in this study have at one time cut themselves with a knife. This makes the options involving blades easily imaginable eventualities, both in terms of the amount of blood shed and the extent of pain inflicted. In summary, the data collected in this section of the questionnaire reveals how participants use their imagination or own experience in order to make judgements about the nature of violence.

(iii) Television and Film Violence

Section C of the questionnaire deals with participants' choice of programmes and films to watch as entertainment and their reactions to them, together with their beliefs about

violence in the media generally. Twenty-four (92%) of the participants in this study stated that they watch television for entertainment, and eighteen (69%) said that they go to the cinema or rent videos to watch at home. Table 4.4 includes a list of television programmes and films identified by participants as those they enjoy watching, yet which are considered to be violent by participants.

Table 4.4: Violent Television Programmes and Films (Study 1a)

Television Programme (Genre or Title)	Number of Participants	Film (Genre or Title)	Number of Participants
Anything with knives and guns	1	Action	2
<i>Animal Hospital</i>	1	<i>Apocalypse Now</i>	1
<i>The Bill</i>	1	<i>Carlito's Way</i>	1
<i>Casualty</i>	1	Comedy	8
<i>Cracker</i>	1	Drama	1
Documentaries	3	<i>Fatal Attraction</i>	1
Dramas	1	Fiction	2
<i>EastEnders</i>	2	Historical Films	2
<i>The News</i>	1	Non-fiction	3
<i>Prime Suspect</i>	1	<i>Platoon</i>	1
Soap Operas generally	2	Pornography	1
Sports programmes (football, boxing, wrestling)	1	Psychological Thriller	1
<i>Taggart</i>	1	Romance	4
<i>Tom and Jerry</i>	1	Science fiction	2
<i>The X Files</i>	1	Thought provoking	1
		Thrillers	4
		Various	4

The programmes identified by the largest number of participants are "documentaries", *EastEnders*, and "soap operas in general". In the case of television programmes there is a considerable range mentioned, including programmes involving "knives and guns",

Prime Suspect, *The X Files*, *Animal Hospital*, and "the news". "Various" types of films, "thrillers", and "romance" films are the preferred types of films chosen by most participants. Some participants specified particular instances, including *Fatal Attraction*, a drama, *Carlito's Way*, a gangster film, and *Apocalypse Now* and *Platoon*, which are Vietnam war films. Again, however, there is a broad selection of genres which participants enjoy watching, ranging from historical films, non-fiction, and "thought provoking" films, to comedy, action, science fiction, drama, and psychological thriller.

The analyses conducted on this data are a content analysis and an interpretative phenomenological analysis. Both analyses are included to assist in the level of transferability within this study, i.e. to clearly outline the processes involved. Firstly, the results of the content analysis are depicted in Table 4.5. Due to the difference in numbers of participants who watch television for entertainment (twenty-four) and those who watch films at the cinema or on video (eighteen), the percentages in the content analysis are worked from the average of these two figures, i.e. twenty-one participants. The emotions shown in Table 4.5 respond to questions concerning what participants enjoy about watching television programmes and films and how they feel when their chosen television programme or film contains scenes of violence.

The most frequently mentioned enjoyable aspects of the television programmes and films identified are that they portray "real life" circumstances, that they are "thought provoking", and they contain "humour". Contradicting the statement that the visual media reflect "real life", however, three participants like the fact that "it isn't real". Echoing this, an equal percentage enjoy the "escapism" of watching television and film and the "suspense" within them, while others find them "intriguing" and "informative". Several participants recall negative responses to television and film, including being "disturbed" or having "to look away" when what they are watching becomes violent. These reactions are supported by those who use the words "disgust" and "distressed" to describe their responses to violence in film and on television.

The remainder of entries in Table 4.5 are each mentioned by one participant only. As found in the previous section about real life violence, this is a limitation of questionnaire data, however, these entries demonstrate the diversity of reactions individuals have toward violent television and film. These responses range from the apathetic, for instance "bored" and "something to watch", to the intense reaction of being "shocked"

and "horrified", illustrating the breadth of participants' experiences. Once again these findings demonstrate the credibility of the study because it has achieved the aim of revealing the nature of experiencing violence via the visual media.

Table 4.5: Frequency of Emotions in Response to Television Programmes and Films (Study 1a)

Enjoyable Aspect or Emotion	Number of Participants
Humour	5
Real life	5
Thought provoking/ challenging	5
Disturbed	3
Escapism	3
Informative	3
Intrigued/interested	3
It isn't real	3
Have to look away	3
Suspense	3
Action	2
Angry	2
Disgust	2
Distressed	2
Entertainment	2
Message/discourse	2
Special effects	2
Storyline	2
Access to another side of human life	1
Aroused	1
Bored	1
Fantasy	1
Horrified	1
Involved	1
Moral stance	1
Nervous	1
Romance	1
Sadism and cruelty	1
Scary	1
Shocked	1
Something to watch	1
Squeamish	1
Upsetting	1

Table 4.6 includes some further statistics in response to questions about television and film violence in the media generally.

Table 4.6: Statistics of Television and Film Violence (Study 1a)

Question	Number of Participants		
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not answered (%)
Do you watch any programmes on TV that you believe are violent?	15 (58%)	9 (34%)	2 (8%)
Do you find that the films you choose includes scenes that are violent?	16 (61%)	2 (8%)	8 (31%)
Do you purposefully avoid films that are violent?	6 (23%)	14 (54%)	6 (23%)
Do you particularly like films that include violence?	2 (8%)	16 (61%)	8 (31%)
Do you think violent films are a healthy part of society that should remain as a popular form of entertainment?	10 (39%)	12 (46%)	4 (15%)
Do you think there are too many violent films?	13 (50%)	8 (31%)	5 (19%)

The majority of visual media consumers in this study find that both the television and film that they watch can be violent. Despite the fact that the majority of participants (54%) state that they do not purposefully avoid violent films, 50% believe there are too many of them. This suggests that the participants in this study have mixed feelings about the nature of violent films and television programmes they watch; 61%, however, reveal that they do not particularly like films which contain representations of violence.

The next phase of analysis is an interpretative phenomenological analysis in accordance with the outline described in Chapter 3. As in the previous section on real life violence, this is a somewhat limited analysis due to the restricted nature of questionnaire data. Nevertheless, the findings of this interpretative phenomenological analysis reveal aspects of experiencing violence via the visual media which are pertinent to the research questions. The first stage of this analysis is initial reading and note making. In brief, this process uncovered a range of responses to media violence including both positive and negative emotions. Once this stage had been completed the data was organised into a series of themes. The themes are a collection of extracts which depict the variety of topics covered in the questionnaire.

The themes revealed in participants' responses about film and television violence include the emotions felt in response to violent media and the opinions given about the presence of violence in the media generally. Firstly, the responses concerning the television programmes and films are represented in five themes: these are distress, entertainment, passion, reaction, and violence. The themes reveal mixed responses from participants. Some have distressing reactions to violent media, such as "distress" (Ps 5, 7), "anxiety" (P3), "disturbed" (P6, 17), and "horror" (P11), and others have intense responses of "anger" (P8) and "injustice" (P8), illustrated in the passion theme. The reaction theme reveals, however, that participants sometimes are "bored" (P7) and "patronised" by media violence "because it's not real" (P14). Likewise the theme of entertainment denotes mixed responses of "excitement" (Ps 8, 25, 26), and "humour" (P10), while others are not entertained by violent programmes and films, "I don't like shootings in the head" (P19) and "you have to remind yourself it's not real" (P20). The violence theme includes both positive and negative comments about the nature of media violence, such as, "some violence is too much especially for family viewing" (P20), "violent films sometimes go overboard" (P26), and "violence is used to portray a message" (P25).

Responses to the final questions in Section C reveal participants' opinions about media violence. Nine themes evolved from this data: action, amount of violence, censorship, children, conditional portrayal, finance, imitation, and reality. These themes reflect a variety of beliefs expressed by participants. For instance that "children will learn inappropriate behaviour" (P21), there are "too many violent films" (Ps 2, 12, 24), "a hint of violence is okay" (P20), that audiences should "boycott such films", and that it is up to the viewer to "switch off and not go to see them at the cinema". Conversely, some participants believe that media violence "depicts real life experiences" (P3) and that media violence is acceptable under certain conditions, such as, when it is "in context" (P6), "dealt with responsibly" (P7), and "relevant to the story" (P9). Additionally, media violence is thought to "give a vent to violence in society" (P10), it is "cathartic" (P13), and "fulfils a need for violence and allows controlled expression" (P25).

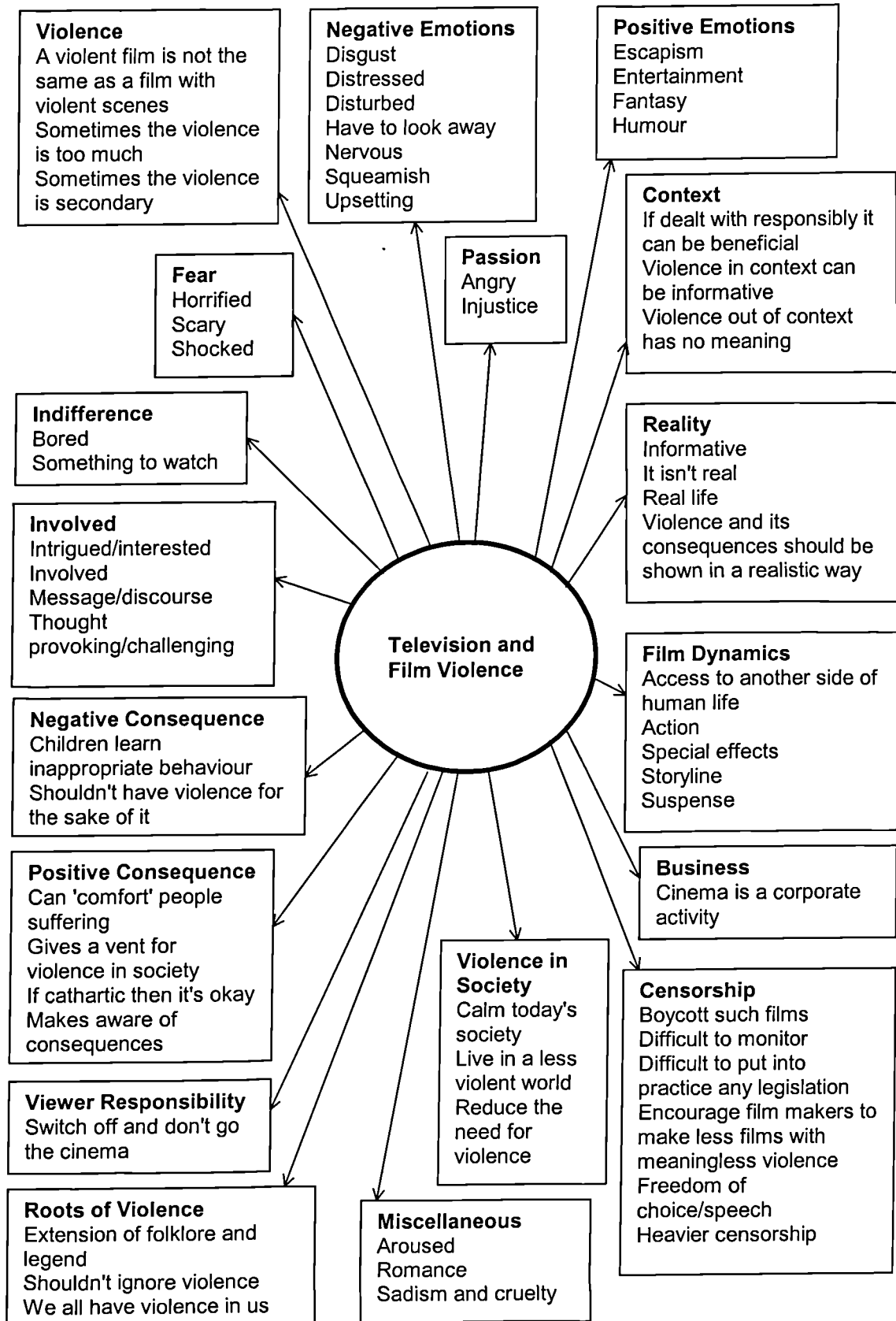
In short, this thematic data reveals a broad range of emotional responses to and opinions about the portrayal of violence in the visual media. In order to further understand the significance of this varied data the themes were grouped together in a manner which clarifies participants' accounts of experiencing of film and television

violence. For instance, the themes of action, amount of violence, censorship, and finance reveal similar concerns about what should be done about the presence of violent representations on screen, whilst the distress, passion, and reaction themes each focus on the responses evoked when watching violence. Through groupings such as these and an in-depth re-reading of the thematic data the analysis moves on to the coding stage.

The codes represent the means by which participants articulate their experiences of violence in film and on television. Eighteen of them were revealed which demonstrates the wide range of ways in which individuals experience media violence. These codes, which have equal status in that they each reflect one way of experiencing violence, are presented in the Diagram 4.2 together with examples from the questionnaire scripts.

The codes of television and film violence exhibit an almost even split between negative and positive elements of experiencing media violence. The positive emotions code reveals that individuals do have favourable responses to violence in the visual media. At the same time however, others have unpleasant experiences, reflected in the negative emotions code. Some of the reactions mentioned by participants are comparable to those found in the analysis of real life violence, shown in the codes of fear and of passion. This illustrates that dramatised violence can provoke similar levels of negative emotions as experiences when violence occurs in real life. However, the involved code demonstrates that not all participants feel this way. Some have positive experiences and speak of being intrigued when viewing violence and enjoying the challenge it presents. Similarly, a number of participants believe that media violence which is portrayed realistically and is informative, for instance, can be beneficial to the audience. This divide continues in the codes of positive and negative consequence. The positive consequence shows that some participants believe that media violence can be effective in doing some good for its viewers. This is not always the case though as revealed in the negative consequence code. Nevertheless, the responses of some participants suggest that whether or not television and film violence is beneficial depends on the context in which it is portrayed. The context code supports the notion that representations of violence can be informative, if they are shown in context and are dealt with responsibly; if that context is lacking the violence is interpreted as meaningless.

Diagram 4.2: Codes of Television and Film Violence (Study 1a)



The issues about the level of violence in the visual media raised by participants in this study are reflected in the censorship code. Arguments both for and against further censorship are made. The violence code demonstrates that some participants are concerned about the nature of violence shown on screen, whilst others express a comparable level of concern about violent conduct, in the violence in society code. Some believe that violence is used by film makers in order for their films to be financially successful, shown in the business code. Others, however, believe that violence is a part of the human condition and therefore should not be ignored by film makers, reflected in the roots of violence code. Finally, the viewer responsibility code illustrates the opinion that it is the viewer's choice whether or not film and television violence become a part of a person's lived experience.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this preliminary study confirm that violence is a complex concept which has infiltrated the lives of participants both in terms of real life experiences and consumption of the visual media. The credibility of Study 1a is illustrated through its success in identifying and investigating individuals' experiences of violence both via the media and in real life. The analyses also reveal that the ways in which individuals respond to real life events and to media output that are violent are diverse and by no means reducible to either simple enjoyment or dislike. Further, the differences between the codes of real life violence and of television and film violence support the argument that while experiencing violence in real life may be comparable to some degree with experiencing violence in the visual media, the two are distinct. The codes of endurance, anxiety, and lack of comprehension, which illustrate the severity of real life violent experiences are absent in the television and film violence codes. Similarly, the analysis of television and film violence include codes which represent positive experiences of media violence, which are absent from the real life violence codes.

The range of views divulged by participants in Study 1a is invaluable in terms of designing the next phase of data collection. Although the data obtained in Study 1a has limitations, it is rich in scope. This means that the aim to explore individuals' experiencing of violence has been achieved more than adequately. The second part of Study 1, which involves a series of individual interviews, will benefit greatly from the results found, as intended when the project commenced.

4.3 Study 1b: Experiencing Violence Interviews

Research Questions

The guiding force behind Study 1b, which constitutes the second phase of this preliminary study, is the findings of the previous questionnaire investigation. The aims of Study 1b therefore are, firstly, to collect a set of data which goes beyond the limitations of questionnaire scripts in terms of both the length and depth of participant responses. Secondly, this study aims to further explore individuals' experiencing of violence both in real life and via film. In a sense, Study 1a opened the door and Study 1b is designed to investigate the contents of the room. The findings of the previous phase which are of particular interest include the differences between participants' responses to real life violence and to representations of violence in television and film. The notion that real life violence is difficult to understand, shown in the lack of comprehension code, is also worthy of further investigation. The television and film codes of reality, context, and violence illustrate that experiencing media violence is not straightforward, therefore these complexities will be explored in more detail. Additionally, the often forgotten pleasurable components of *media violence*, revealed in the positive emotions and positive consequence codes of media violence, will be examined.

The research questions guiding Study 1b are:

- ♦ What are the similarities and differences between experiencing violence in real life and experiencing it via the visual media?
- ♦ What is the detailed nature of individuals' experiencing of media violence and real life encounters with violence?
- ♦ What do individuals find enjoyable about watching representations of violence in the visual media?

Design

(i) Method

Individual semi-structured interviews are the method of data collection in Study 1b. Interviews are appropriate to this second phase of data collection because they permit the accumulation of in-depth data which will provide the researcher with a more thorough understanding of the ways in which individuals experience violence.

(ii) Materials

An interview schedule was developed out of the findings of Study 1a which is utilised to direct the conversation between interviewer and interviewee. The schedule is basically a list of areas to be included in the discussion but is flexible in that these topics may be covered in any order and in more or less depth depending on the participant (a copy is in Appendix 3.1). In addition to this, an audio cassette recorder and cassettes were required in order to make a record of the interviews. An appropriate location which was easily accessible to participants and which restricted any interruptions was necessary also in order to ensure a comfortable interviewing scenario.

(iii) Participants

Eight participants took part in Study 1b, seven of whom accepted the invitation to be interviewed after having completed a questionnaire for Study 1a, the other approached the researcher after having heard about the research project from a work colleague (at De Montfort University's Scraptoft Campus). A list of these participants can be found in Appendix 3.2.

(iv) Procedure

Each participant who accepted the invitation to be interviewed was contacted and a time and place for the interview was arranged. These were individual interviews meaning that the only two people present when they occurred were the researcher, in the role of interviewer, and the participant. When each participant arrived they were informed that the interview would last approximately one hour and that it would be a conversation about their experiences of violence. The interviewer stressed that they need not discuss anything which made them feel uncomfortable and that they may terminate the interview at any time. They were told that the interview would be recorded on audio cassette but that their identity would not be revealed. Once these terms were understood, informed consent was given by the participants for the interview to take place.

Once the interview commenced the researcher was guided by the schedule which had been designed prior to the interview sessions. This guidance was flexible, however, as each interview developed in an idiosyncratic manner. The aim of the interviewer was to cover each of the areas on the schedule, but at the same time to allow the participant to talk freely about issues as and when they were important to them. This meant that

the areas outlined were discussed in different orders in each case and that sometimes participants brought up subjects that had not been previously determined. An additional aim of the researcher in conducting the interviews was to talk as little as possible. The reasoning behind this are both to reduce the possibility of biasing the participants' responses and to give participants the freedom and confidence to speak openly without being interrupted.

When all the interviews had been completed they were transcribed to provide printed copies of what was said. The transcripts were then used in the subsequent analysis. (A breakdown of the transcription guidelines is in Appendix 1.1.)

Analysis

The interpretative phenomenological analysis conducted in Study 1b is significantly more detailed than that in Study 1a. This is due to the nature of data gained; the material used in Study 1b is a conversation between two people, interviewer and participant, in which the participant is given room to say whatever s/he feels is appropriate. Therefore the data is made up of peoples' talk, with all its spontaneity and "thick description" (Geertz, 1973). What follows is a presentation of the findings of the interpretative phenomenological analysis which reveal the ways in which participants experience both real life violence and representations of violence on television and in film.

(i) Real Life Violence

In the first part of the interview participants were invited to discuss an episode in their life which they found violent. In some cases, this was the event participants had described on the questionnaire, in others it was something different. Table 4.7 below offers a summary of the violent experiences described by each participant.

Table 4.7 shows that three (Ps 2, 6, 11) of the eight individuals taking part in this study had been a direct victim of violence. One participant (P18) did not recall a specific event which was violent, while the others were witnesses to some kind of fight between either strangers or people known to them.

Table 4.7: Participants' Experiences of Violence (Study 1b)

P	Sex	Age	Violent Experience
2	M	65+	Punched to the floor by a boy who lived on his street. A court case followed (he was helped by LVCSS). The boy's father intimidated him throughout the court case. Not mentioned on the questionnaire.
6	F	18-25	Punched at a university ball. Not mentioned on the questionnaire.
7	M	18-25	Witnessed a gang attacking a man outside a club with stones and clubs. Mentioned on the questionnaire.
8	M	36-45	Witnessed a Road Traffic Accident (as a police officer), one driver chased the other, he followed, the chasing driver stabbed the other with a chisel. Mentioned on the questionnaire. Witnessed a fight in a night club, one man head butted another and broke his nose. Not mentioned on the questionnaire.
11	F	36-45	Heard about a man being stabbed (whose brother passed on the questionnaire to P11). Not mentioned on the questionnaire. Was in an abusive relationship. Mentioned on the questionnaire.
12	F	26-35	Talks about watching <i>Reservoir Dogs</i> . Mentioned on the questionnaire. Witnessed a fight in an underground station in London between two girls. Not mentioned on the questionnaire. Saw two drunks fight, one head butted the other and he passed out in the street. Not mentioned on the questionnaire.
14	M	26-35	Witnessed a fight between football fans while on a bus. A group were attacking one man. Mentioned on the questionnaire. Was head butted whilst out at night. Not mentioned on the questionnaire.
18	F	26-35	Has memories of accidents but not violence. Heard about her friend's son being beaten up at night. Says the city centre is threatening at night. No questionnaire received from this participant.

As in the previous sections of Study 1 the interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999) follows the five stages outlined in Chapter 3. The first stage involves initial readings of the corpus and making notes on the topics covered. This stage revealed that participants' encounters with real life violence are varied both in the details of the events and in the responses experienced. The second stage, the identification of themes, develops these initial evaluations of the corpus in a more structured fashion. The themes revealed are collections of speech which reflect the different ways in which participants verbalise their responses to violence in real life, which include: description of violence, justification, long term consequences, professional experience, reaction of others, recovery, short term consequences, and trauma. These themes reveal the intensity of participants' responses to violent events in real life both immediately after their encounter and after some time has passed. It is

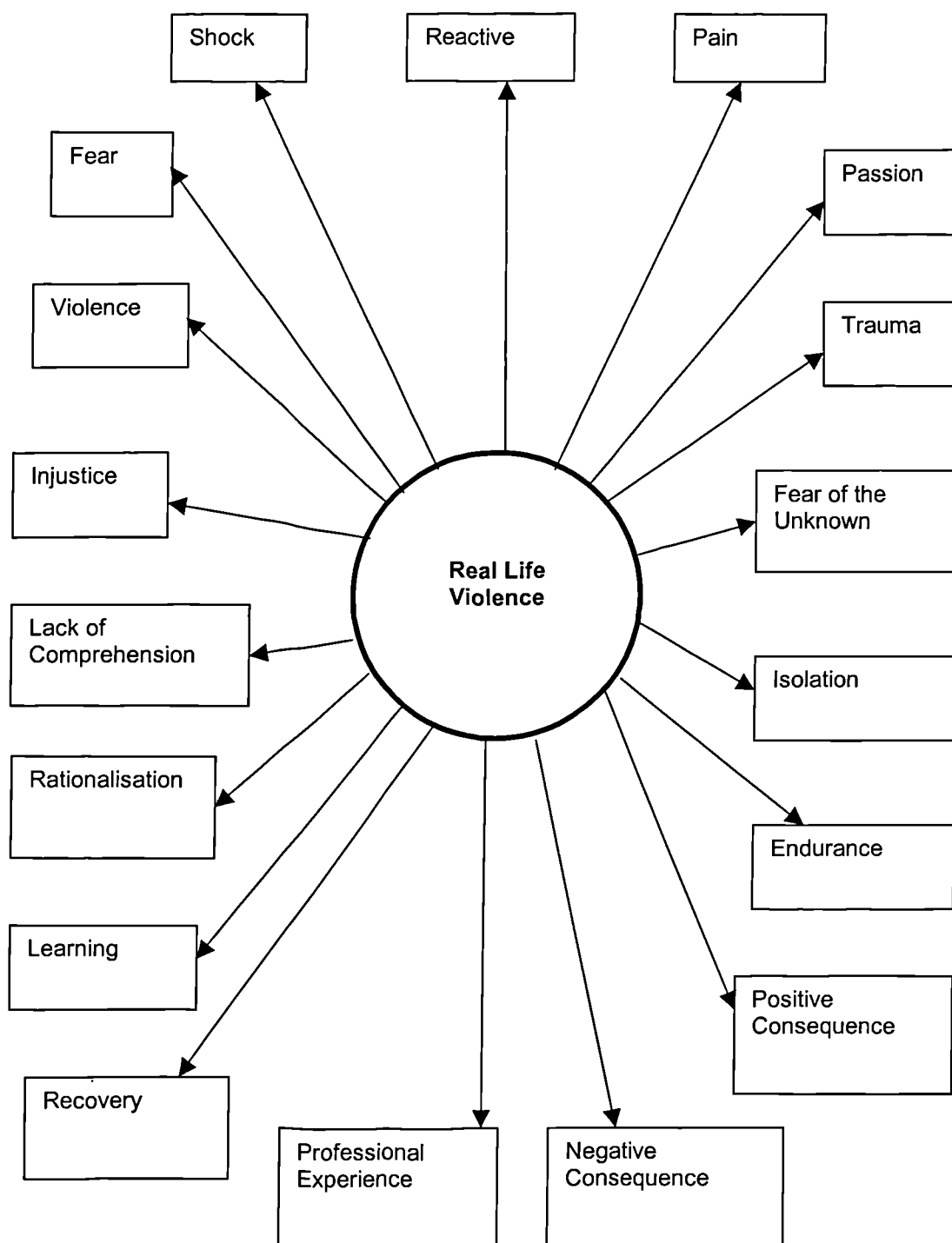
notable that two participants (P7 and P8) talk about violence differently than the others, as illustrated in the theme of professional experience. These two men both encountered violence in their careers (P7 was in the army and P8 is a former police officer) and as a result describe violent situations in a more pragmatic manner.

In the next stage of organising themes, the data within each theme was re-read in order to gain an idea of the overall picture of what the participants are saying. This process then enabled the researcher to group themes together where appropriate. The thematic groupings therefore are made of up combinations of extracts from different themes. For instance, data from the themes of long term consequence and recovery were grouped together and the theme of trauma formed a grouping with the short term consequence theme. The themes of description of violence, justification and professional experience, on the other hand, included such an extensive amount of data that they remained as individual themes. The results of this organisation process is the material which is used in the fourth stage of the analysis.

This fourth stage is coding. What is involved here is a further examination of the thematic data but with an interpretative aim; the goal in this stage is to go beyond simply collecting extracts of a similar nature by identifying data which is relevant to the research questions. In Study 1b the data collected comprises hours of speech, instead of a series of short answers to a questionnaire, which means it is possible to conduct a more detailed analysis and to use extracts from the transcripts to demonstrate the significance of the codes revealed. Again the definition of a code in this project is that introduced in Chapter 3, i.e. a code is a representation of a shared entity which is available to participants when communicating what violence means to them.

The codes established are shown in Diagram 4.3. Those which best exemplify the range of participant responses to violence in real life are focused upon in the ensuing discussion. Reference to the codes revealed in Study 1a demonstrates the level of dependability within this research as a number of them have been found a second time in Study 1b; for instance, the codes of endurance, fear, passion, negative and positive consequence, and the reactive code, all emerged from the data in both parts of the study.

Diagram 4.3: Codes of Real Life Violence (Study 1b)



Not surprisingly the code with the most extracts comprises the participants' narratives about the violence they experienced. This code is made up of all the occurrences when participants describe violence and therefore includes expressions such as "verbal

abuse" (P2), "clenched fist" (P2), and "punched in the head" (P14). In most cases, these words feature in the description of the event but seem to be glossed over by participants and little detail is offered. Perhaps participants felt that these expressions were sufficient to get the message across, or that reliving the experience through vocalising it made them feel uncomfortable and therefore unable to give further information. Two participants, however, were able to describe in some detail the violence they encountered:

- P6: "it wasn't as if he just pushed me it was like a re - a clenched fist .. in the middle of the face .. so it wasn't you know if he'd pushed me it wouldn't have been as bad but because it was .. you know he had his full weight behind it and - just sent me flying"
- P8: "it was a really bad cut in the back of the hand and every time his heart - he had a heart beat .. blood spurted out from the cut - veins and that so we had to .. wrap it up I always carry a clean hanky and stuck it on top of his hand and erm .. to reduce the pressure of blood coming out"

The above extracts indicate to a degree what it is like to experience violence in real life. This is further elaborated in the reactive code. This code includes the discourse participants used to illustrate the immediate reactions to the event, both their own and those of others:

- P12: "I just felt sorry for the poor fool who'd been er - just you know .. given this - an awful head er - blow into the head and he was so drunk already that he just like collapsed you know arms and legs out in the middle of the road .. I just thought oh my god you know what if he's run over by a lorry and he's you know he has a grieving family a wife and children and I [. .] and there were a lot of people looking out their windows and I think the police were called"
- P14: "one particular er young chap got himself punched in his head and actually went over and was not particularly well [. .] having seen the incident no-one seemed to go to the assistance of the .. young chap concerned"

The full extent of participants' responses, however, is made more apparent in the code of shock. Five of the eight participants described being in shock when confronted with violence, although not all of them expressed it in this way, for example, P2 and P6 said they got "the shakes", P11 was "confused", and P8 said that the violence "came out of the blue". Other phrases used by participants similarly reflect this confusion:

P6: "a lot of people didn't really realise what was happening it was - it happened so quickly"

P8: "it stopped everything everything just stuck completely"

This illustrates that participants were not prepared for the violence which occurred; they did not know how to respond to the incidents described and simply froze. The severity of participants' responses to real life violence is exemplified further in the codes of trauma, fear and pain. Although limited examples of these codes were found, their presence is merited through the power of the words used, for example:

P2: "I had all the stress and trauma .. of being afraid to go out of the house and daren't move .. I had to have someone with me all the time"

These words paint a vivid picture of this elderly man being a prisoner in his own home as a direct result of the violence he suffered. In a similarly powerful way, P11 uses the metaphor of physical violence to express the severity of mental abuse, represented by the trauma code:

P11: "it's your spirit your soul is attacked .. your mind is attacked .. your body is attacked and either way you can die .. it's not just being killed poof poof [she makes her hand into the shape of a gun and shoots twice] .. there's plenty of ways you can kill people apart from shooting you through the heart with a gun .. and the pain .. of not being shot through the heart when it's so bad .. is enormous people get very very unstable for a while very unsettled because they need somebody to care for them"

P11's story of violence also makes up a significant part of both the codes of fear and of pain:

P11: "enormous pain fear .. complete amazement that this person was being so outrageously abusive .. frightened .. don't know what to do confused .. because they make you very confused when they're like that .. whether they're out drunk or not if they're angry or vicious to you or they hit you and they threaten you what do you mean you're going out tonight .. you can fucking well stay here I'm going out"

Each of the codes discussed thus far relay the message that the participants in this study did not know how to deal with the violence they experienced. This is further demonstrated in the lack of comprehension code. Not only were participants shocked

and afraid, they did not have any rationale through which the violence could be understood:

P2: "well the biggest feeling I thought was dismay"

P7: "it's such a long time ago it's fairly remote now so .. there's nothing - no strong emotion it's just .. just despair that - you know what's the point"

P8: "just complete disbelief [. .] it just didn't make sense .. I didn't feel any anger or .. anything really I was more concerned about helping this chap .. but it was just [. .] I still feel this disbelief even after all these years"

Likewise, the code of injustice illustrates the participants' inability to find reasoning in the violence they witnessed or suffered. For instance, while discussing other peoples' reactions to his attack, P2 says:

P2: "people said that I was brave .. but I wasn't brave at all I just didn't see .. why he .. erm had the given right to do what he did to me .. and the fact that erm .. to go do it to anyone else either .. and this was the reason I took him to court"

P6 had a similar feeling of injustice:

P6: "I was angry .. how dare he .. you know hit me .. absolutely no right - this person who I - who I didn't know"

Others showed how they had attempted to justify the violence they witnessed, yet they still found it unjustifiable:

P8: "the provocation was from the other side .. but I mean .. my belief is that if - you come to violence .. then you know there must be another way of dealing with a situation even if it's walking away .. and in my opinion it hadn't got that serious"

P14: "if it's .. we're talking about gangs having scuffles I think you expect that at football but erm it doesn't particularly bother me - if I see someone being picked on one particular person being picked on by sort of being out numbered by one to ten or whatever then it does affect me because that's unfair that .. but people may - it's arguable to say but .. if there's crowd violence inside or outside a match people say I just say let them get on with it if their daft enough to do it .. but I think it's different if there's just one person's being picked on by .. so that's my general feeling about it"

The second example above reveals the kinds of struggle participants have when attempting to explain why the violence they encountered occurred. On other occasions, however, reasons are found and these are included in the rationalisation code. For example, the perpetrators are described as "macho" (P2), "cowards" (P2), they were "being silly lads" (P11), and had "had too much to drink" (P11). Other reasons given were simply that he had "overreacted" (P6), or that he was "that type of person" (P2). In dealing with the road accident and stabbing that he witnessed as a police officer, P8 had the unusual opportunity of asking the perpetrator why he assaulted the other driver:

P8: "we did arrest him later on we managed to catch him later .. and when I got him down to the station I said to him I said erm .. what was all that about .. and it was .. and this was going back to 1973 I think and er it was - it was a case of road rage .. this - he said - this chap was driving too slow for me I wanted to get going it was too slow moving off at the lights that's why I went in the back of him .. so it was the other driver's fault in his eyes and not his .. and that's why .. *through his frustration and this bloke being too slow for him and* then having the accident and having to slam down even more - jus - just flipped"

This discourse illustrates how people rationalise events differently. The driver who initiated the chase and ended up stabbing the other was frustrated by the slowness of his victim's driving and it is this frustration which P8 focuses on to rationalise his behaviour. However, the driver who was arrested believed that the other driver was at fault and his rationalisation of the event, therefore, was the other man's driving.

A similar inability to cope with real life violence is demonstrated in the codes of fear of the unknown and of isolation. The former includes those phrases which suggest the participants' fear of what may happen when violence breaks out, for instance:

P8: "I was only feet behind stopping him from doing it .. but on the other hand it could have been me that had got attacked [. .] nowadays because so many weapons are used .. it isn't now a case of you know you might get a good hiding .. I mean you could actually get killed .. you know .. and that sort of makes you stop and think"

This shows a degree of fear for the self when confronted with violence. The isolation code similarly reflects the participants' self concern, moreover, it reveals the sense of aloneness felt when coping with violence:

P2: "it was never .. taken seriously enough in my family .. you know what I mean .. it was - I didn't want people I didn't want my wife and .. stepson and what have you you know .. doting over me and saying oh are you alright this and .. I didn't want that .. but when I tried to talk about it .. unless it was in front of .. other friends .. it more or less fell on deaf ears you know [. .] I had to go it alone really"

The consequences of experiencing violence in real life do not cease once the initial shock and upset is dealt with; the code of endurance exemplifies this, for instance P2 said that he still could not "come to terms with it" at the time of the interview. The long term result of violence for others, however, is positive. Some participants felt that they learnt something from their experience, shown in the learning code:

P8: "I think it's confirmed a few things .. in - violence .. doesn't actually help .. erm .. yes the - the - if you play a sport you get rid of natural aggression .. [. .] but when it's sort of .. like the situation in the night club .. erm tha - in my opinion is just unnecessary I think .. it's made me more aware of the fact that violent situations can arise much sooner than you anticipate them arising [. .] as you get older you suddenly realise you can't base everything on you - react to things ..you know everyone's different .. and that's the hardest bit is finding that out"

Finally, worthy of mention is the professional experience of violence code. Two participants (Ps 7 and 8) talked about experiencing violence in a professional environment. These men discussed "dangerous situations" (Ps 7 and 8) of violence differently from the others, although they did not appear to be aware of this themselves. Both talk about avoiding violence:

P7: "you know make sure you're not in the - in the dangerous situations"

P8: "if I think there's any potential of anything .. dangerous then .. we'll go the other way"

Nevertheless, in terms of their careers as a soldier and a policeman respectively, avoiding violence was not a possibility:

P7: "you don't get it as an option to get involved in that kind of thing .. because it's just what you expected"

P8: "it was just part of your job"

Their vast experience of having to deal with violence professionally becomes evident in the ways these men describe violent events, for instance:

P7: "this has happened before when I've stepped in to break up a fight and then you realise that you - you know you're sticking up for the wrong person although they might be on the receiving end then you might provoke him in some way because you're sticking up for them .. and they think you're on their side and they like to have a go at you so .. you have to .. work out why people are doing this just for your own safety .. on the streets .. I mean I'm not saying that .. you know anything could excuse a beating like that but .. you know it's just I suppose you know there's no point you charging in to help somebody if you - you know it's going to end up with two people bleeding on the floor rather than just one"

P7 demonstrates his rational approach to violence when deciding whether or not to step in. Both men reveal that dealing with violence on a day to day basis has led to greater awareness and knowledge about how to deal with violence when it does occur. P8 spoke about the ways in which himself and his colleagues prevented themselves from becoming as distressed as other participants have when confronted with violence:

P8: "I think erm .. to be a policeman you've got to have a certain sense of humour .. and it was made a bit of a joke of .. but that's the way most policemen .. deal with the job .. erm .. when I've told people outside the police force .. it's a story I - I must have told a lot of times over the years and er .. you know .. it's aghast of horror you know they can't just imagine this actually happening over something totally unprovoked erm .. when I start to explain about the injury - don't say anymore .. you know because I do get quite graphic when I'm telling the story and some people do get upset about it and I've had to .. be careful to see how people react to how far as I can go .. because I think from my point of view I thought I could tell this story to anyone in the same way and it wouldn't be a problem but some people they - they don't like it they don't like the full details"

P8 is aware that he has an established mechanism to deal with violence due to his long standing experience, in fact he remarks, "I don't suppose the average person sees an awful lot of violence" (P8). Both P7 and P8 maintain, however, that they would prefer to avoid violence yet their experience makes them "the kind of person to step in and stop fights rather than start them" (P7). This conscious effort to find a means of coping with the frequent occurrence of violence is supported by Morrison et al (1999) who also discovered that police officers state that a sense of humour is vital in order to manage their emotional responses. However, Morrison et al's (1999) interpretation of this goes

beyond simply a method of coping as the respondents in their study reveal a sense of accustomisation toward violence and describe it as a foible of human behaviour.

In short, the codes of real life violence in Study 1b reveal an abundant array of responses. The majority of analytic codes confirm that encounters with violence can be distressing and that feelings of fear, of pain and of isolation endure over time. Not being able to understand violent events was found to be significant again, as it was in Study 1a. This is particularly relevant to the research questions because to find violence distressing is a generally accepted fact but to have no understanding of why violence occurs in a particular scenario is something which may not be apparent in peoples' conceptualisations of violence. The codes of injustice and rationalisation further stress the difficulties participants have in their judgement of violence. It is fair to state that a person needs to understand an event, in terms of its genesis and its context, before a judgement about its meaning can be made. The injustice code shows how this is sometimes impossible for victims or witnesses of violence. The code of rationalisation, on the other hand, demonstrates that some participants try hard to find reasons for violence, reasons which may or may not be valid to others, but which they hold on to in order to make violence meaningful.

(ii) Television and Film Violence

The second half of the interview was set aside to discuss representations of violence in the visual media. Participants were asked to name a television broadcast (i.e. a drama, a television film, or the news) or a film (watched at the cinema or hired on video) which they found violent. These examples were used to open up the debate about participants' responses to representations of violence and throughout the interviews participants referred to a number of different examples. These are included in Table 4.8.

The range of television broadcasts mentioned by participants is notable in that cartoons, like *Tom and Jerry*, and soap operas, such as, *EastEnders*, *Neighbours* and *Hollyoaks*, are judged as violent in the same way as are police dramas and feature films, such as *L.A. Takedown* and *Fatal Attraction*. Each of these distinct genres of broadcast are considered to be violent by at least one participant. Unsurprisingly, five participants cited the television news as a violent programme. The films which participants describe as violent either at the cinema or rented on video, see Table 4.9,

Table 4.8: Violent Television Broadcasts (Study 1b)

Television Broadcast	Number of Participants
All the soaps	1
Animations	1
<i>The Bill</i>	2
<i>Casualty</i>	1
<i>Coronation Street</i>	1
<i>Dillinger</i>	1
Drama/Documentary	1
<i>EastEnders</i>	1
Everything	2
<i>Fatal Attraction</i>	1
<i>Hollyoaks</i>	1
<i>Jo Brand</i>	1
<i>L.A. Takedown</i>	1
Mainly films	5
Most programmes	2
<i>Neighbours</i>	1
The News	5
<i>No Child of Mine</i>	1
Police dramas	2
<i>Tom and Jerry</i>	1

do not display the same level of variety, however. (Films watched on television are separated from those seen at the cinema or on video because the censorship of films on television is often greater than that adopted for cinema and video release.) The majority of films discussed are generally advertised as, and conceived as, violent films, for instance both *Reservoir Dogs* and *Natural Born Killers* were billed as controversially violent in nature and the video rental of each was delayed. Other films, like the *James Bond* series and those which tell of the Vietnam war are expected to include scenes of

dramatic and often graphic violence unlike *Silence of the Lambs* and *The Exorcist*, for instance, which include portrayals of violence which may be considered less explicit.

Table 4.9: Violent Films (Study 1b)

Cinema/Video Film	Number of Participants
A lot of popular films	1
<i>The Accused</i>	1
<i>The Deer Hunter</i>	1
Documentary style films	1
<i>The Exorcist</i>	1
<i>Fierce Creatures</i>	1
<i>Friday the 13th</i>	1
<i>Independence Day</i>	1
The <i>James Bond</i> series	1
<i>The Lord of the Flies</i>	1
<i>Natural Born Killers</i>	1
<i>Pulp Fiction</i>	2
<i>Reservoir Dogs</i>	4
The <i>Rocky</i> series	1
<i>Silence of the Lambs</i>	1
<i>Sleepers</i>	1
<i>Trainspotting</i>	2
Vietnam War films	1

The initial step of the analysis is reading and making notes on the sections of corpus which deal with film and television violence. This stage revealed that again the ways in which participants experience violence are many and varied. Once this initial reading is complete the interpretative phenomenological analysis moves on to identifying themes within the data. The themes which emerged include the following subjects which were discussed by the majority of participants: censorship, copy cat crime, enjoyment,

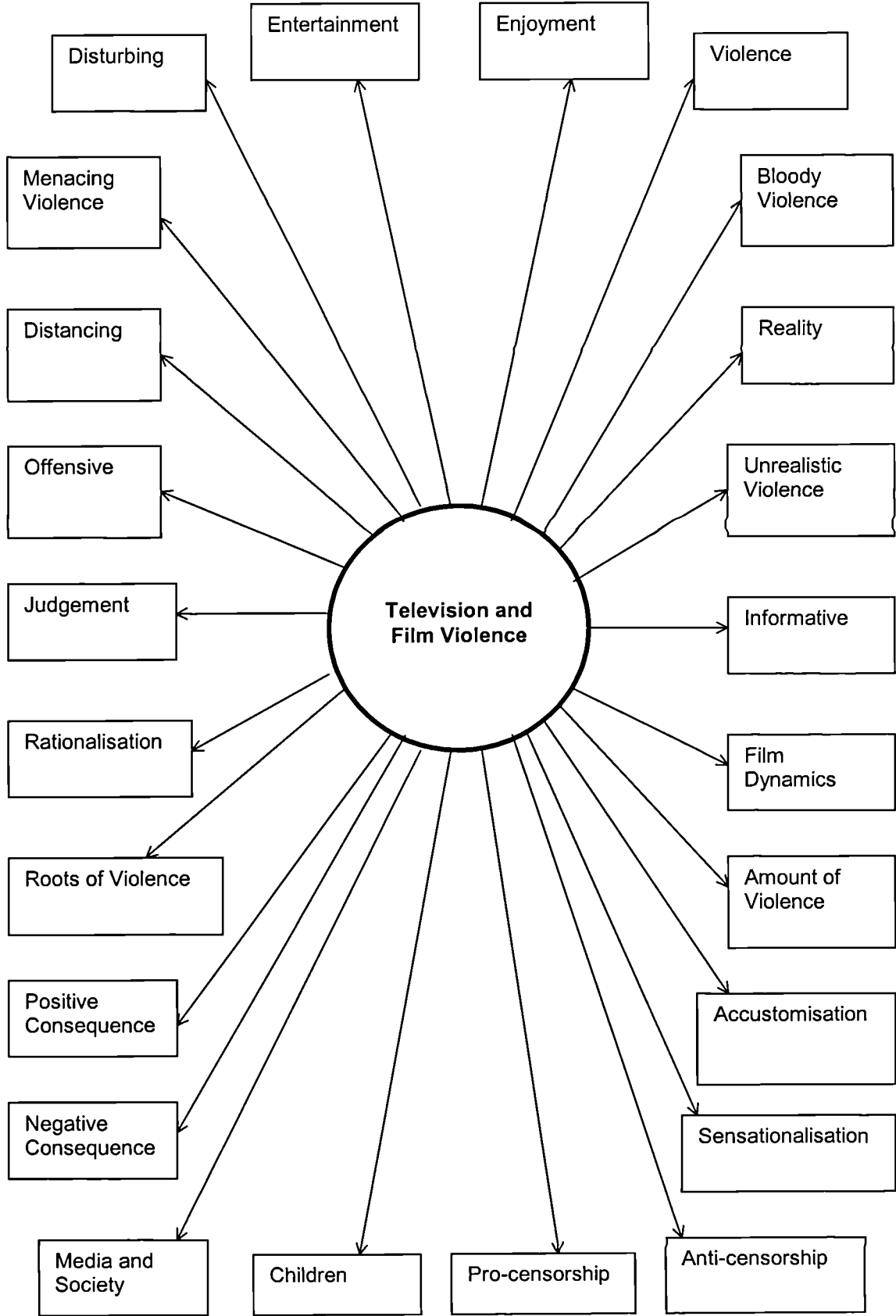
general consequence, justification of characters' violence, justification for the portrayal of violence, opinions, personal consequence, television news, and violence. This set of themes reveal that some participants are shocked by violence on screen and believe there is too much of it, whilst others find violence entertaining and informative. Similar mixed responses are illustrated in terms of the consequences of media violence. Some participants believe that media violence should be reduced because of their concern that violence may influence viewers, particularly children, whilst others believe that the current level of censorship is sufficient to regulate representations of violence on television and in film.

In short, participants' discourse of violence in the visual media reveals a continuum of responses and beliefs; within this data there is a range of both positive and negative responses to violence in film and on television. Organising the themes is the third stage implemented in this analysis. Out of this process four thematic groupings emerged: those concerning consequences, the themes of censorship and of copy cat crime, the justification themes, and finally television news and violence. The way in which the themes are organised into these thematic groupings is based upon the similarities across themes. For instance, participants' discussions about censorship are often linked to those about the possibility of individuals committing copy cat crime. Hence, it is the overlap within these themes that led the researcher to group them together in this way.

Due to the extensiveness of data within each thematic grouping the stage of coding was less than straightforward. *Rather than simply being able to discern the codes from one thematic grouping, of a positive and negative nature for instance, the set of codes which emerged is a complex interpretation of the issues which stand out as most significant across the thematic groupings in terms of how participants experience violence via the visual media.*

Consequently, a large number of codes was established in this stage of the interpretative phenomenological analysis. Diagram 4.4 presents the codes of television and film violence which is followed by a discussion of extracts taken directly from the transcripts.

Diagram 4.4: Codes of Television and Film Violence (Study 1b)



Again a number of similarities exist in the codes above to those revealed in Study 1a; the codes of censorship, positive and negative consequence, reality, and roots of violence are found in both. However, significant developments have been made in this second part of the study. Due to the wide range of ways participants articulate their experiences of media violence it was considered necessary to further breakdown the discourse of violence. Hence, the code of violence simply includes the occasions when participants use the word "violence". For instance, participants used terms such as, "actual violence" (P18), "actual physical violence" (P6), "psychological violence" (Ps 6, 8), and "domestic violence" (P12). These examples show clearly that participants have identified different forms of violence in the programmes and films they watch. The use of the phrase "actual physical violence" suggests that media violence does not always involve physical actions but that sometimes a scene is violent in terms of the mood it creates. Other entries in this code demonstrate how participants assess violent scenes, as "quite violent" (P6), "pretty violent" (P18), or "extreme violence" (P7), for example. This grading of violence can be compared the distinctions made in Morrison et al's (1999) study. There participants distinguished between 'violence with a little v', 'violence with a big V', and 'violence with a massive V'. Additionally, it is made apparent in the code of violence that participants respond idiosyncratically to film violence, a finding that is supported by many previous studies (e.g. Sander, 1997; Hill, 1997; Gunter, 1984). The following two extracts are both in reference to *Reservoir Dogs* yet offer disparate opinions:

P12: "it was just you know violence violence and more violence just for the sake of entertaining people and what upset me was .. it did entertain people"

P6: "I got the impression that it was going to be really really violent but I didn't actually find it all that violent because a lot of the violence was off screen"

The remainder of references made to violence in the corpus is represented by a number of codes considered to carry particular weight in the task of illuminating the nuances of participants' experiential accounts. The code of bloody violence is one such example which includes those times when participants remark on the amount of gore and blood in violent scenes:

P7: "there was the odd place where I was saying ooh no I don't like seeing that you know it's getting a bit gory you know but .. at the

same time there was nothing that .. I don't know .. it sounds odd to say bu - I don't think there was anything that .. sort of extreme because all this kind of thing .. it happens [. .] if you go around shooting things people get hurt I mean if you see the amount of blood coming out of Tim Roth that's enough to put you off .. firing a gun in the first place"

P12: "a lot of the popular films at the moment are all erm .. they all contain .. blood you kno - even the .. comedy film that I saw last night *Fierce Creatures* ended up .. with a bloke being shot [laughs] right between the eyes you know and er .. I think that it's a vital ingredient of the popular films at the moment"

Again there are differences within the code of bloody violence; P7 is arguing that showing the bloody consequences of violence is beneficial, while P12 above dislikes the presence of blood in any genre of film. The menacing violence code reveals discourse about a different kind of violence, for instance:

P6: "a lot of the violence was off screen [in *Reservoir Dogs*] .. so it was like your imagination has to conjure up the types of violence as it's happening .. which is actually probably more powerful than .. because your imagination can conjure up things much more than the tv screen can show you so [. .] I found something like *Silence of the Lambs* .. more violent because it's more psychological you know I don't think you have to have actual violence for something t - physical violence for something to be violent you know you can have psychological violence and mental torture as well which can be equally as .. as horrific as actual physical violence mutilating somebody"

Discussing *Friday the 13th*, P8's ideas also suggests that the mental work going on when watching a film is more powerful than the image itself:

P8: "I suppose that you know god what's going to happen next .. and a bit of apprehension .. and you can understand why people .. at this stage look away because you know something's going to happen and you're not quite sure .. sure what erm .. I think with anything like that you get an adrenaline rush don't you .. and er .. I won't say that .. it over scared me it's just purely an apprehension if you know - you think - you start to imagine .. the worst scenarios yourself .. invariably they don't happen"

Later P8 makes the same point with an interesting story about the screening of *The Exorcist*. He watched it at the cinema on its initial release in the 1970s and tells of how a siren sounded in the cinema "when it's coming up to the horror bit":

P8: "a siren will sound right well you can imagine the tension .. because as soon as the siren sounds .. automatically you start to get het up and er .. again what was actually shown wasn't that bad .. but the build up to it made it worse [. .] I mean the idea was that if you were a bit faint hearted you shouldn't be there anyway [laughs] but you could put your hands over your eyes you know so it was giving you some warning"

The code of unrealistic violence, covers violence nearing the other end of the spectrum, in that there is no sense of severity either in the representations of violence themselves or in the viewer's response. For example, P7 describes *L.A. Takedown* (which was later released for the cinema as *Heat*):

P7: "huge .. fire fights in the middle of Los Angeles .. bullets flying everywhere .. you know that's the thing you know .. you see stuff like this where you know you've got eight guys with semi-automatic rifles blasting around .. the only thing you never actually see is them actually hit anything I mean .. you know there's all the innocent standbys just .. ooh the guns over there .. erm so I think it's unrealistic really"

Some of the reactions participants do have to representations of violence, however, are revealed in the disturbing code. P6's responses to *The Accused*, which was based on a real life rape case, are an example:

P6: "*The Accused* with Jodie Foster I find that I can't watch that scene at the end I just find that .. really really upsetting and it really plays on my mind and be - and the added fact because you know that it's real and somebody's actually had to go through that .. it definitely brings it home much more"

Similarly P14 was upset by a drama-documentary based on a character awaiting the death penalty:

P14: "I watched a drama on death row .. where someone claimed that they hadn't committed the offence I can't remember if it was murder or whatever where I actually saw them lead him to the electric chair and you heard the big doors go to and you obviously knew this guy would die that's the only time I think ever .. erm that I've sort of been very close to passing out or feeling very very uncomfortable [. .] I felt very upset and alarmed because it wasn't a film it was a real life instance that someone was going to die there and then"

Fiction films also provoked disturbing responses, as illustrated in P12's account:

P12: "*Sleepers* was another movie I saw that really disturbed me and .. erm .. you know the domestic violence at the very beginning blew my mind before we ever got to the sexual abuse sort of thing and er .. I can remember seeing examples of domestic violence and I thought it captured it very well .. in the film"

The issues concerning the differences between representations of violence in fiction and non-fiction programmes are confounded somewhat by the distancing code. This code refers to comments made mainly about the television news. Despite the fact that the news tells true stories of violence occurring at the time of broadcast, participants did not report feeling distressed by it. Rather they "switch off" (Ps 6, 14):

P6: "I find it's really easy to .. just switch off .. completely on what's happening because it's on so many times a day .. erm .. and you read it in the paper you maybe hear it on the radio and you see it on the news .. it's then easy to forget that this is actually happening and I think because there are not .. reactions from the news readers they do it's you know very straight and they just tell you the story and that's it - there's rarely any emotion felt in it .. it's easier to cut yourself off .. from the .. actual .. you know the actual story"

Returning to fiction, many participants told how they enjoyed watching films and television dramas which include representations of violence, as revealed in the enjoyment code. P14 explains how he enjoys films containing representations of violence and believes that he is not alone:

P14: "I think the general people .. general public .. not all of them a good majority including myself sometimes quite like violent aspects to dramas and films and what have you I mean a lot of the films you see at the .. cinema are geared towards violence .. and I think a lot of people make violence a part of films to attract people to watch it .. but that's my view [. .] I suppose I do get a bit of a buzz out of it"

P7 also remembers being exhilarated after watching *Reservoir Dogs*, if only in an embarrassed fashion:

P7: "I suppose at the time I was just captivated by it in a way [. .] at the time it's the spectacle of the .. of the film [. .] it's funny when you get out - usually if you've seen a good film and you feel all the exhilaration and good feeling and you start .. talking about it and .. I don't know I suppose it is bit silly but .. we walked out with big grins on us faces"

Another way this enjoyment is expressed is given by P8. He enjoys feeling able to experience the action within a violent film for himself:

P8: "for a bit of escapism the *Rocky* films erm .. because just for a couple of hours .. you know you can just fantasise about you know this bloke's comes from nowhere and he now rules the world and er .. I think as I come to think about it you actually feel as though you're in the ring with him .. and er it's the violence in the sense that .. you feel actually as though you want to be in the ring hitting the other chap"

Some participants do not enjoy watching violence, however:

P2: "it's something that they enjoy watching .. it isn't something I enjoy watching"

P18: "well I'd like a good soppy one I like *Sense and Sensibility* and you know all those kinds of things .. but I end up going to see *James Bond* and [laughs] I'm not that keen"

Whether or not participants have enjoyed watching violent films, they make judgements about the presence of violence in the media and peoples' enjoyment of it, revealed in the judgement code:

P12: "I mean when you see the action er movies with you see the hero hanging off a er helicopter and shooting with the other hand you see how far it's gone I mean it's really farcical"

P18: "I just think it's gone too far and there's no pulling back to a large degree but we should try"

Others have "no objections" (Ps 7, 14) to representations of violence in film. Interestingly, P6 considers the cultural differences which may be at work when judging screen violence:

P6: "the British view of - of violence which .. here's very considered .. erm sort of a flaw in your character whereas in many other countries it's .. you earn respect .. if you're violent .. so I think it brings out deeper issues which I think a lot of people probably don't consider when they're sitting watching it .. when they see a man hitting a woman they don't consider the whole .. spiral effect .. they just see that image .. and think of power .. I think power is probably the main issue"

The code of rationalisation explores the means by which participants justify violence in the visual media. The rationalisations offered by participants are either concerned with the background of film characters or the story which is being told. For instance:

P6: "for things like *Trainspotting* or whatever which - I think .. in its own way can be quite violent because it's like violent through drugs and things .. for a film like that - I'd consider more .. about you know why they're doing .. you know what they're doing try to get into the character .. with a lot of the glorified violent films probably not because - because they're so over the top .. you can't really .. you can't connect with the character at all because they're so completely different"

P7: "I mean if you can see a reason why a character's acting in a violent way you know doing this thing then .. it sort of makes the film more .. more real and more interesting .. whereas you know if you get someone just walk in and throw a grenade in and bang for no apparent reason then .. I think it's - what's the point [. .] it depends on the context I mean the .. when you get stuff that the whole idea of the show is just the violence then .. I wouldn't be likely to watch something like that I mean you get other things you know and the violence is .. is central to the plot then .. you know there are occasions when you can't develop the story without showing this kind of thing so .. it - it depends you know there's got to be something more than the violence"

P12, on the other hand, dissects the typical good guy-bad guy rationalisation of violence adopted in many genres of film:

P12: "I mean he did what he had to do to be the hero and it was all in a good cause .. you know .. and it was all for the sake of good winning over evil so - er - that er .. killing people and erm .. getting revenge .. was all seen as good .. whereas when the bad guy did it it was bad so er [laughs] I don't know what we're supposed to make of that .. it seems to be alright if some people do it .. as long as you've got the title o - of hero .. but yes I mean erm .. if you've got blood and gore it's action packed and you know there's suspense and er .. you know whatever"

The reality code is linked to this notion of violence being justified when it serves a purpose, for example to tell a story; film violence is also rationalised by participants when it purports to be real life, i.e. when it is considered to be realistically portrayed. The examples below illustrate this:

P7: "the violence was the film [. .] I don't think it was done in a gratuitous way .. er .. more just showing how things can be .. and I

think that's the whole point now of getting a glimpse of the other side of like that you don't see very often .. so although it was violence .. it was I think it's done in a more or less sensible way .. I mean you saw the consequences of it"

P8: "The Bill .. and the likes .. they've all got a certain amount of violence .. and I think quite rightly so in some cases I think - I think it needs to be portrayed as true life"

The arguments given here are supported by the positive consequence code. Some participants believe that exposure to media violence can be beneficial in terms of "educating people about the choices they make" (P12). The following extracts demonstrate that, according to these participants, representations of violence can be a positive source of information:

P7: "I do think that .. if they show the real consequences instead of just sweeping it under the carpet .. there's no use in just sort of pretending it doesn't exist .. I think if people are shown to be aware of it then .. it'd probably be relatively [clears his throat] excuse me er be better equipped to .. cope with it"

P11: "it gives people a chance to see right from wrong"

Others do not agree, however, as shown in the code of negative consequence, for instance:

P2: "you must ask somebody to show you a *Dillinger* film I mean the violence that erupted there .. all those years ago .. was still there on the television screens .. but I think in this day and age I mean in that day and age it was a film .. and once that film had been shown .. there was no consequences from it .. but I think today .. this violence does .. have consequences .. I don't know why .. but it does .. far more than it did years ago"

P6: "for a lot of men it's an extension of - of .. their power .. especially power against women erm .. because the majority of films and - and violence if you look at it it's a male dominating of women .. whether it's sexual or not it doesn't have to be erm so I think it brings in the whole issues of - of .. gender and oppressive society"

The code of media and society contains similar concerns expressed by participants about the relationship between representations of violence in the visual media and violence in society. These examples taken from P6's transcript illustrate the way participants puzzle over the issues involved:

P6: "I think people always .. as soon as anything happens they jump on the band wagon and it's the media's fault it's always the media's fault .. erm there's too much violence on television children are seeing too much you know they've got far too much access to it especially things like the internet and so forth .. coming on so .. they .. they're always blamed .. erm but just because I watch a film about a serial killer .. doesn't mean that I am going to go out and do .. a copy cat crime .. I mean you have to ha - be a certain type of person anyway and prone to that you have to have violent thoughts you have to have been having those thoughts from the beginning .. you're not going to just suddenly you know .. immediately become a sociopath over night"

P6: "I suppose it depends on how .. erm .. obsessed you are with films and .. how obsessed you are with violence to start off with .. erm I think if you're a person - a violent person anyway and you see these films and it justifies what you're doing .. then .. maybe it would have a bigger effect on you but I think if anything .. it - it can create a fear of crime .. a fear of violence larger than the scale of what it actually exists and I blame the media entirely for that I do think they create .. especially for women they do create a fear of crime especially - sexual crime"

The majority of participants agree with P6's first statement that people who commit copy cat crime after watching a film are not simply imitating the film:

P7: "I can't really see .. people seeing a film and going out and acting in a way of a film just like that I mean I'd say if that is the case then there's probably some other .. cause down there which has .. just caused it you know maybe the film acted as catalyst but .. I wouldn't blame the film .. so much"

P12: "I think that a person who goes out and shoots indiscriminately there's a whole lot of things .. going on there .. and maybe the film was the straw that broke the camel's back or .. maybe it wasn't .. but I wouldn't say that I'm a psychologist or whatever .. but I wouldn't say that it is just one thing that would cause that .. I'd say you'd have to be .. kind of .. unstable"

The children code reveals that participants show more concern for child viewers of violence than fellow adults. Several participants (Ps 2, 6, 7, 12, 18) are worried about controlling what children watch:

P6: "I do think we ought to control it and it - is quite scary sometimes the amount of .. violence I think that children are probably seeing on it erm .. more than we would have .. seen when .. we were younger"

P14: "I think with technology like videos and parents going out erm and what have you and friends and they have videos and telly I don't think it [the television watershed] works .. well I mean I've got not proof no evidence that it doesn't work it's off my own .. mind and how younger people work .. pressure at school did you see this programme did you see that programme and you know they'll watch it when their parents are out or when they're round at their friends [. .] where there's a will there's a way and people .. who end up watching something .. but er it's what can you do about it I mean you've got to show adult programmes on tv .. but it's how do you stop children watching them on tv I can't think of any other methods"

At the same time, however, it was suggested that media violence may be beneficial in teaching children:

P12: "I think that erm .. they should be prepared for it .. it - violence seems to be very popular at the moment but I think children should be .. should have an idea of what's right and what's wrong which I suppose that's a very .. subjective thing but er .. yes they should have some guidance"

This debate was then elaborated by many participants to include the advantages and disadvantages of censorship, shown in the pro- and anti-censorship codes. Some would prefer stricter guidelines or believe the system needs to be changed in some way:

P8: "I'm not fully sure how it works now .. censorship you know who makes the final decision how many's on the board that makes the final decision [. .] I'm not sure how it could be improved erm .. perhaps .. they need a wider cross section of people .. going back to the fact that you know .. what I think is acceptable isn't necessarily the case of somebody else .. and I think quite often if you're going to do something like this you need someone who isn't involved in the industry .. you want a member of the public giving their opinion on what they think of a documentary or a film"

P14: "it's got to be properly enforced"

P18: "I think we accept it too easily nowadays I think we've grown up with it and we just accept it that's right that's the right way to handle situations .. erm instead of talking about it etceteras [. .] it's in our society now and that's it .. and there's no going back .. and I think it goes too far you know before the watershed etceteras but .. nobody's going to make a fuss now because er .. there's nothing you can do"

Others express their disillusion with censorship:

P6: "sometimes the things they will censor are really bizarre .. and it's they might censor something like swearing .. but they will keep in a really violent scene where there's erm .. people - stabbing each other or something so I sometimes find that the censorship - quite - quite strange .. and also it's a group of people sitting round a table deciding what we shouldn't watch and what we should watch .. and what they find really offensive which it's - a fairly personal thing really what you find offensive [. .] so .. mixed feelings about it I can understand the reason behind but I don't always think they do it successfully"

Although participants can rationalise the presence of violence in the visual media and some of them enjoy watching it, they do have concerns about the ways in which it is altered by censorship practices and the consequences there may be in the wider society. Others, however, believe that portraying violence on screen can be educational in the sense that it makes audiences aware of the damage violence can do to peoples' lives, despite being upset or disturbed by it themselves. Despite the contradictions within the remarks made by participants concerning the consequences of media violence, the fact remains that they are aware of the discourses of violence that exist within society. Barker and Brooks (1998) express their surprise in discovering the same kinds of references to what they call folk theories of the media. This confirms that viewers of violent media content are knowledgeable about both the structure of mass communications and the arguments that have been posed by psychologists about the potential harm inflicted by them.

Summary

The findings of Study 1b support those of the preceding phase: the accounts given confirm that participants' conceptions of violence in real life differ enormously from their understandings of representations of violence in the visual media. The codes of fear, pain, and trauma, for instance, illustrate the severity of participants' responses to real life encounters with violence. A fear of the unknown is reflected in the discourse and participants' feel isolated when they are forced to deal with a violent situation. Additionally, the code of endurance reveals that the implications of experiencing violence in real life do not cease when the event itself is over but they continue to alter participants' beliefs and the way they conduct their lives. Several participants, however, find they have learnt from their experiences of violence. For example, it has made them more aware of violence and how to cope with it, although P11 vocalises the general consensus with the frank remark, "I would rather not have gone through it thank you".

Violence in the visual media, on the other hand, is enjoyed by some participants. They are captivated by action packed scenes of violence and sometimes are amused by representations of violence, whilst at the same time some are distressed by it. The menacing code reveals that a film can be disturbing without scenes of overt violent actions because the suggestion of violence is such that participants conjure up images in their minds which are more powerful than those which are portrayed. The codes of rationalisation, reality, and positive consequence reveal that participants appear to judge film violence by certain criteria. For instance, if violence in film or on television is portrayed in a realistic manner or if it is complemented by a believable plot, then it is viewed in a positive light because it both represents events which happen in the real world and it educates people about the nature of violence.

The codes of media and society, children, and censorship confirm participants' concerns about the moral issues of portraying violence in the visual media. Many believe that children should not be exposed to violence and that tighter censorship laws should be enforced. Others, however, are convinced that, while they say it may act as a catalyst in certain situations, media violence does not influence people to commit crimes or to become violent.

4.4 Summary of Findings

The findings in this first study have revealed a wide range of ways in which individuals experience violence, both in real life and via the medium of popular film. As such they have fulfilled the aim, set out in the research questions of both Study 1a and Study 1b, to explore the nature of experiencing violence. Study 1a asked specifically how individuals define violence. This question has been answered succinctly in the questionnaire data of Study 1a. Many variables have been added to the conventional definition of violence. Participants have stated that violence need not involve more than one person, it may be a verbal as well as a physical act, and that watching and participating in sport can be violent. This finding has confirmed that violence is not a single entity, but that its meaning is fluid.

The variety of ways in which violence is experienced is illustrated through the sheer number of codes which evolved from the data, a total of seventy-two. Nevertheless, within this diversity a number of codes were found to be present in participants'

accounts about both real life and media violence. The codes of positive and negative consequence were present throughout the whole corpus. This reveals that violence in real life can have both negative and positive outcomes, in spite of its traumatic, painful, and enduring nature. Similarly, media violence, as well as being positive in that it is enjoyable, can have negative consequences, demonstrated in the codes of disturbing, offensive and fear. The codes of fear and passion also appear in participants' talk about both media and real life violence, illustrating that individuals have intense reactions to violence, regardless of its context. There are some codes which are unique to experiencing real life violence, however, such as the codes of anti-violence, anxiety, endurance, injustice, pain, and trauma. These codes stress the gravity of experiencing violence in real life. Additionally, the codes of insecurity, fear of the unknown, and lack of comprehension did not emerge in relation to media violence. These codes confirm that individuals are insecure and frightened when confronted with real life violence to the extent that it cannot be understood. As such it is unlikely that experiencing violence in real life is something to which these individuals have chosen to expose themselves. In contrast, those codes which evolved solely in participants' discussions about media violence, for example, the codes of entertainment, enjoyment, and involved, suggest that watching this particular film or television programme has been an active choice and a pleasurable experience. This notion of choice, the fact that media violence can be enjoyable, and the increased level of severity attached to real life violence are crucial in that they demonstrates the distinctions between experiencing violence directly in real life and vicariously through mediated images. The revelation of these differences, together with the similarities discussed above, has fulfilled the goal in Study 1b to explore the similarities and differences between experiencing violence in real life and via the medium of film or television.

However, little data was obtained which refers explicitly to individuals' enjoyment of violent film and television. The codes of entertainment, enjoyment, and positive emotions confirm that media violence is sometimes pleasurable but there is little to suggest exactly what it is about watching media violence that is enjoyable. Therefore the question, what do individuals find enjoyable about watching representations of violence in the visual media, posed in Study 1b has not been answered fully. This may be due to the common conception that violence, be it real or dramatised, is an undesirable ingredient in contemporary culture. The implication of this may be that

individuals are reluctant to admit their enjoyment of something in fantasy which is deemed harmful and destructive in reality.

To conclude, *Study 1: Experiencing Violence* has achieved the function it set out to fulfil, i.e. to gain a preliminary understanding of the ways in which individuals both define and experience violence. This in itself is a tribute to its credibility. The variation of both method and analysis in this study seeks to illustrate the dependability of the findings through the consistencies revealed. The confirmability of this study is demonstrated throughout this chapter as the analytic processes adopted are such that the data does not undergo any radical transformations but is simply re-structured into meaningful subcategories.

The findings of Study 1 have revealed many aspects of experiencing violence and in the main have answered the research questions. However, further investigation into the peculiarities of experiencing violence vicariously is necessary if an in-depth understanding is to be reached. Study 1 has introduced the range of ways in which violence is experienced but it has not tackled the complexities involved within individuals' meaning-making processes. The next chapter presents the second study in this project, *Study 2: Meanings of Violence*, which makes use of these preliminary findings in order to further explore experiences of media violence.

Study 2: Meanings of Violence

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the procedures and findings of *Study 2: Meanings of Violence*. This study is informed by the conclusions made in Study 1 both in terms of what it aims to achieve and the methods adopted. Study 1 adopted two methods of collecting data, a questionnaire and individual interviews. As the results of Study 1a and Study 1b show, more detailed responses were obtained through the individual interviews because participants were able to discuss at length their concerns and opinions about their experiences of violence. Due to this, the method best suited to this study, which aims to elaborate upon the findings of Study 1, is considered to be individual interviewing. The aim of this second study is to expand upon the breadth of codes established in Study 1. With the knowledge that was gained from these codes, Study 2 will further examine the experiencing of violence both in real life and via film by revealing the meanings which participants attribute to their varied experiences.

The research questions will be discussed first, followed by a report of the study's design which will make transferability possible, the analyses conducted make up the fourth section, and finally in this chapter will be a summary of the findings.

5.2 Research Questions

The objective of this study is to elaborate upon the findings of Study 1. However, whereas Study 1 was a general exploration of experiences of violence, Study 2 aims to examine more specifically the meanings individuals attach to their experiencing of violence. Due to the introductory knowledge gained in Study 1, this second study is able to gather more focused data in order to explore the mechanisms that are at work in participants' attempts to make sense of their experiences of violence. In this sense, Study 2 is somewhat of a departure from the previous one. Nevertheless, several codes established in Study 1 provide the starting point for the issues to be raised in this study, including in particular the media violence codes of context, disturbing, enjoyment, rationalisation, reality, and roots of violence, and the real life violence codes of lack of comprehension, positive consequence, and professional experience.

The task of this second study is primarily to understand individuals' experiences of film violence, although real life violence continues to be explored. A film list is introduced in this study to add a degree of structure to individuals' accounts. The list consists of films which are known to include representations of violence. Due to this participants were solicited through different agencies, especially the local cinema, in order to contact individuals who are likely to have watched at least one of the films on the list.

The research questions guiding this study are:

- ♦ In what ways do individuals define violence, both in real life and via the medium of popular film?
- ♦ How do individuals attribute meanings to their experiences of violence and what is the nature of these meanings?
- ♦ How do individuals rationalise their experiences of violence?

5.3 Design

Method

Individual semi-structured interviewing is the method adopted in Study 2. The breadth of findings in Study 1b indicate that this is a method well suited to the study of experiencing violence. Additionally, because this study intends to further question individuals about their experiences of violence in real life, as well as those via popular film, it is considered appropriate to discuss these often sensitive issues at length and on a one-to-one basis. Individual interviews therefore provide a research scenario which is respectful of these requirements.

Materials

An interview schedule (a copy is in Appendix 4.2) was devised in accordance with the research questions which was utilised to guide the discussion. Rather than structuring the interviews in a rigid manner, however, this schedule was used flexibly in order to ensure that the relevant topics were covered. To provide a lasting copy of what was said the interviews were recorded using an audio-cassette recorder and cassettes.

In addition to this a list of films was shown to participants which was used to initiate the discussion of film violence (the list is in Appendix 4.5). All the films included on this list were published relatively recently (in the late 1980s and 1990s) and include scenes of violence. Several of them are notorious for their violent content, for example, *The*

Terminator, *Reservoir Dogs*, and *Natural Born Killers*. The remainder of them act as representatives of particular film genres, such as war films, e.g. *Good Morning Vietnam*, Mafia films, e.g. *Donnie Brasco*, action films, e.g. *Lethal Weapon*, crime dramas, e.g. *LA Confidential*, and films based on non-fiction stories, e.g. *The Accused*. In order to provide some contextual information about these films, i.e. the stories told, and the reviews received, a film analysis was conducted. During the interviews many participants discussed films which do not appear on the list, consequently the film analysis includes these additional films as well as the original set shown to participants. Some examples of this film analysis are included below in order to contextualise the following evaluation of participants' experiencing of film violence (the full version is in Appendix 4.6).

Firstly, *The Accused* is a dramatised account of an actual case which took place in America and is described in the following ways by two film texts:

"A provocatively-dressed woman is raped after performing a sexy dance at a seedy bar."

(Walker, 1997: 40)

"The rape itself is not shown until near the end of the film, and then in an unblinking detail which some critics have suggested will turn the cinema audience itself into voyeurs. Nonetheless, this is a brave film [which treads] a fine line between social concerns, feminism and exploitation."

(Karney, 1997: 781)

These extracts make clear that the violence in this film is based around the rape of a woman. By contrast, *GoodFellas* is also based on actual events but this time the violence represents the life of a member of the American Mafia:

"Martin Scorsese' *GoodFellas* is a long, violent and enthralling interweaving of biography (the real-life tale of Henry Hill, who grew to manhood in the Mafia, and eventually ratted on his former associates), social observations and black comedy."

(Karney, 1997: 805)

Reservoir Dogs and *Pulp Fiction* also deal with the American underworld although these fall under a different genre of crime film which can be described as new realism. The former is described as "sickeningly violent, appallingly funny and arrestingly accomplished" (Karney, 1997: 828) and *Pulp Fiction*, which has many of the same qualities, is summarised as:

"Four interlocking stories with unexpected twists involving a gangster, his two hitmen, his wife, a mysterious briefcase, and a boxer who refuses to throw a fight after being paid to do so."

(Walker, 1997: 623)

Both these films are directed by Quentin Tarantino who has become known for his original use of gritty violence in order to tell stories of quintessential American criminals.

Born on the Fourth of July and *Good Morning Vietnam*, on the other hand, are both films which deal with the Vietnam war, although in distinct ways. *Born on the Fourth of July* tells the story of a crippled Vietnam veteran who joins the anti-war effort (Karney, 1997; Walker, 1997). *Good Morning Vietnam*, on the other hand, is said to satirise "the buffoon-like stupidity of the top brass back in the comfort of their headquarters and, while not eschewing poignancy, [raises] a barrel of laughs" (Karney, 1997: 773).

Schindler's List is also set during war-time but portrays the particular true story of the businessman Schindler during the Second World War:

"During the Second World War, an Austrian businessman persuades the Nazis to let him use Jewish slave labour in his factory; and then, with the money he earns, bribes a brutal SS commandant to save 1,100 Jews from concentration camps."

(Walker, 1997: 677)

The drama-documentary style of *Schindler's List* and its extra sensitive subject matter set this film apart from the other war films discussed by participants.

Finally worthy of note are *The Terminator* and *Tomorrow Never Dies*. These films represent a somewhat less serious niche of the violent film market. *The Terminator* tells the story of an android from the future, played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, who "is sent back to the present time on a mission of extermination" (Walker, 1997: 761). *Tomorrow Never Dies* is a recent episode from the *James Bond* series and is described in these terms by critics:

"*Tomorrow Never Dies* is responsibly formulaic: there is the spectacular pre-credit sequence (actually disappointing here); the guns, girls and gadgets; the action set-pieces in exotic locations; and the explosive ending which resolves an international conflict."

(Arroyo, 1998)

Tomorrow Never Dies, therefore, as well as being a film in its own right is also defined in terms of the well known *James Bond* formula.

These excerpts from the film analysis set the scene for the examination of participants' accounts. As shown above a variety of films were discussed in the interviews, illustrating the diversity within the concept of violent film.

Participants

Thirteen people took part in Study 2 who responded to campaigns set up in various agencies: six were contacted through a campaign at the local Odeon Cinema, one through Leicester Royal Infirmary, one through the Leicestershire Police Constabulary, three through the Leicester City Public Library, and two through De Montfort University's Kimberlin Library and Students' Union. Details of these participants can be found in Appendix 4.4. Throughout this chapter participants are referred to as P1, P2 etc.. Although the numbers of participants in Study 2 coincide with those in Study 1, it should be made clear that this samples is made up of different people.

Procedure

Consent was gained to set up campaigns in the above agencies in Leicester in order to attract people to contact the researcher and consider taking part in the study. On the posters used (a copy is in Appendix 4.1) was a brief outline of the research topic and contact numbers. In addition to this, permission was granted by the Odeon Cinema to

approach cinema goers directly in their building at Freeman's Park in Leicester. Those who volunteered were given more information about the study and what participating would entail. Having considered this, arrangements for an interview were made with those who were willing.

On arriving at the interview location, participants were briefed about what would happen in the interview. They were informed that the interview would be audio-recorded but that they would remain anonymous. Participants were told that the purpose of the interview was to discuss their experiences of violent film and of violence in real life, but that they were not expected to discuss anything which they felt was inappropriate. If the participant then consented the interview commenced.

At the beginning of the interview participants were shown the film list (in Appendix 4.5) and were invited to choose two from the list to discuss initially which they had seen. They were asked to choose one film which they considered to portray violence in a way which was difficult to cope with and one which contained violence which they considered reasonable. If a participant had not seen any of the films on the list they selected others of a similar nature which they had seen. This was requested of participants in an attempt to limit the discussion of film violence to experiences of specific films. In a similar way the second part of the interview focused on an event participants had experienced in real life which they conceived as violent. The purpose of this was to expand upon the previous findings about real life violence as well as to locate individuals' meaning-making of film violence within the context of violence per se.

Once the interviews had taken place they were transcribed, in accordance with the guidelines (in Appendix 1.1), in order to provide a printed copy.

5.4 Analysis

The principal analytic tool implemented in Study 2 is an adaptation of Smith, Jarman and Osborne's (1999) interpretative phenomenological analysis, as outlined in Chapter 3. Other subsidiary analyses were also adopted, however, to help contextualise the inquiry. The introduction of a film list in the interview scenario required a brief analysis of the films selected (some examples of which were given in the design section of this chapter and the full version is in Appendix 4.6). Additionally, whilst conducting the

analysis it became apparent that many participants referred to existing discourses, or interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), in their interpretations of film violence. Consequently, it was considered beneficial to conduct a discourse analysis on a number of publications which discuss media violence, including articles from the press and texts about previously completed psychological studies, such as those mentioned in Chapter 2 (the discourse analysis is in Appendix 4.7).

Film Violence

Film violence was discussed first in the interviews and participants were invited to select two films from the list, one which included scenes of violence which were difficult to watch and one which was considered to be acceptable. Throughout the course of the interviews 53 films were mentioned by participants, 26 of which were chosen from the list (in Appendix 4.5) and 27 which were not. All these films are shown in Table 5.1.

The film mentioned by the largest number of participants is *The Accused*, which is followed closely by *GoodFellas*, *Pulp Fiction* and *Trainspotting*, each mentioned by six participants. The next most frequently discussed films include *Reservoir Dogs*, *Seven*, and *The Terminator*, mentioned by four participants. *Born on the Fourth of July*, *Casino*, *Die Hard*, *Good Morning Vietnam*, *Lethal Weapon*, *Schindler's List*, and *Tomorrow Never Dies* are discussed by three participants. (Details about these films can be found in the Film Analysis in Appendix 4.6.)

Table 5.1: Films Discussed (Study 2)

Film	On the Film List (Yes or No)	Participants
<i>The Accused</i> (Director: Kaplan, 1988)	Yes	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10
<i>An American Werewolf in London</i> (Director: Landis, 1981)	No	3
<i>Blazing Saddles</i> (Director: Brooks, 1974)	No	12
<i>Blue Velvet</i> (Director: Lynch, 1986)	No	4, 9
<i>Born on the Fourth of July</i> (Director: Stone, 1989)	Yes	5, 6, 9
<i>Casino</i> (Director: Scorsese, 1995)	Yes	2, 4, 5

Table 5.1: Films Discussed (Study 2) Cont.

Film	On the Film List (Yes or No)	Participants
<i>A Clockwork Orange</i> (Director: Kubrick, 1971)	No	5, 12
<i>Copland</i> (Director: Mangold, 1997)	No	2
<i>Copycat</i> (Director: Amiel, 1995)	Yes	2
<i>Crash</i> (Director: Cronenberg, 1996)	No	2, 3
<i>The Deer Hunter</i> (Director: Cimino, 1978)	No	13
<i>Die Hard</i> (Director: McTiernan, 1988)	Yes	4, 9, 11
<i>Donnie Brasco</i> (Director: Newell, 1997)	Yes	2
<i>Face/Off</i> (Director: Woo, 1997)	No	1
<i>Full Metal Jacket</i> (Director: Kubrick, 1987)	No	11
<i>The Godfather</i> (Director: Ford Coppola, 1972)	No	4, 5
<i>Good Morning Vietnam</i> (Director: Levinson, 1987)	Yes	5, 8, 13
<i>GoodFellas</i> (Director: Scorsese, 1990)	Yes	2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11
<i>La Haine</i> (Director: Kassovitz, 1995)	No	5
<i>Heat</i> (Director: Mann, 1995)	Yes	11
<i>Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer</i> (Director: McNaughton, 1990)	No	5
<i>The Jackall</i> (Director: Caton-Jones, 1997)	No	2
<i>Kalifornia</i> (Director: Sena, 1993)	Yes	5
<i>Kiss The Girls</i> (Director: Fleder, 1997)	No	5
<i>The Krays</i> (Director: Medak, 1990)	No	11
<i>LA Confidential</i> (Director: Hansen, 1997)	Yes	11
<i>Lethal Weapon</i> (Director: Donner, 1987)	Yes	2, 5, 6
<i>Men In Black</i> (Director: Sonnenfeld, 1996)	Yes	1
<i>Misery</i> (Director: Reiner, 1990)	No	10
<i>Natural Born Killers</i> (Director: Stone, 1994)	Yes	2, 4
<i>Nil By Mouth</i> (Director: Oldman, 1997)	No	2

Table 5.1: Films Discussed (Study 2) Cont.

Film	On the Film List (Yes or No)	Participants
<i>Once Were Warriors</i> (Director: Tamahori, 1994)	No	5, 7
<i>Platoon</i> (Director: Stone, 1986)	Yes	3,8
<i>Pulp Fiction</i> (Director: Tarantino, 1994)	Yes	3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13
<i>Reservoir Dogs</i> (Director: Tarantino, 1992)	Yes	4, 5, 6, 9
<i>Scarface</i> (Director: De Palma, 1983)	No	6
<i>Schindler's List</i> (Director: Spielberg, 1993)	No	2, 5, 10
<i>Scream</i> (Director: Craven, 1996)	No	3
<i>Seven</i> (Director: Fincher, 1995)	Yes	2, 3, 6, 8
<i>Shallow Grave</i> (Director: Boyle, 1994)	Yes	10
<i>Silence of the Lambs</i> (Director: Demme, 1990)	No	2
<i>Sleepers</i> (Director: Levinson, 1996)	No	3
<i>Sybil</i> (Director: Petrie, 1976)	No	8
<i>Taxi Driver</i> (Director: Scorsese, 1976)	No	10
<i>The Terminator</i> (Director: Cameron, 1984)	Yes	3, 4, 8, 9
<i>Tomorrow Never Dies</i> (Director: Spottiswoode, 1997)	No	2, 3, 8
<i>Trainspotting</i> (Director: Boyle, 1996)	No	2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11
<i>William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet</i> (Director: Luhrmann, 1996)	Yes	1

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999) conducted in this study complies with the five stages outlined in Chapter 3. The final stage of the analysis is the process of writing up the report, which is what follows. The first three stages of initial reading and note-making, identifying themes, and organising

themes will be discussed primarily before moving on to an in-depth evaluation of the fourth stage of coding. This coding stage will be divided further into sub-sections synonymous with the codes established.

The stage of initial reading and note-making involves studying the transcripts closely in order to gain an understanding of what participants are sharing about their experiences. This phase of analysis revealed that participants' experiences of film violence depend largely upon the nature of the particular film at hand. In addition, it became apparent that whilst discussing certain films participants referred to the wider issues of the presence of representations of violence in the media generally.

The second stage involves identifying themes which emerge within the corpus. These themes are made up of collections of transcript extracts which include the range of topics discussed by participants and which reveal both similarities and differences within the data. The manner in which themes are identified is quite straightforward. The researcher will read the first transcript and highlight certain parts of the discourse which refer to particular issues, such as being shocked or disturbed by violence, descriptions of violent scenes, and evaluations of characters within films. As the researcher moves on to subsequent transcripts this process becomes somewhat cumulative, i.e. further examples of the themes identified previously are gathered. On top of this it is essential that the analyst is open to novel themes which were not apparent before. In these cases, the researcher will return to previous transcripts in order to uncover any thematic data which may have been overlooked on the first reading.

A number of themes are salient in this study, including the following: accustomisation, amount of violence, children, confused emotions, consequence, fascination with violence, glorification of violence, justification for characters' violence, justification for showing violence, negative emotions, positive emotions, realistic versus unrealistic violence, and violence. The theme of realistic versus unrealistic violence illustrates that the issue of realism is important in participants' experiencing of film violence. Similarly, the themes of justification show that the nature of portrayal within film plays an active role in the conceptualisation of violence. These findings are consistent with those of Morrison et al (1999), Sander (1997), and Gunter (1985). The bulk of the themes demonstrate that participants are concerned about film violence, in terms of the consequences of watching such material, yet some experience positive emotional

responses to violent media even to the level of finding it fascinating. These positive themes which reveal that participants do enjoy violent film support the findings of Barker and Brooks (1998) and Hill (1997), who each stress the fact that violent cinema is an enjoyable form of entertainment.

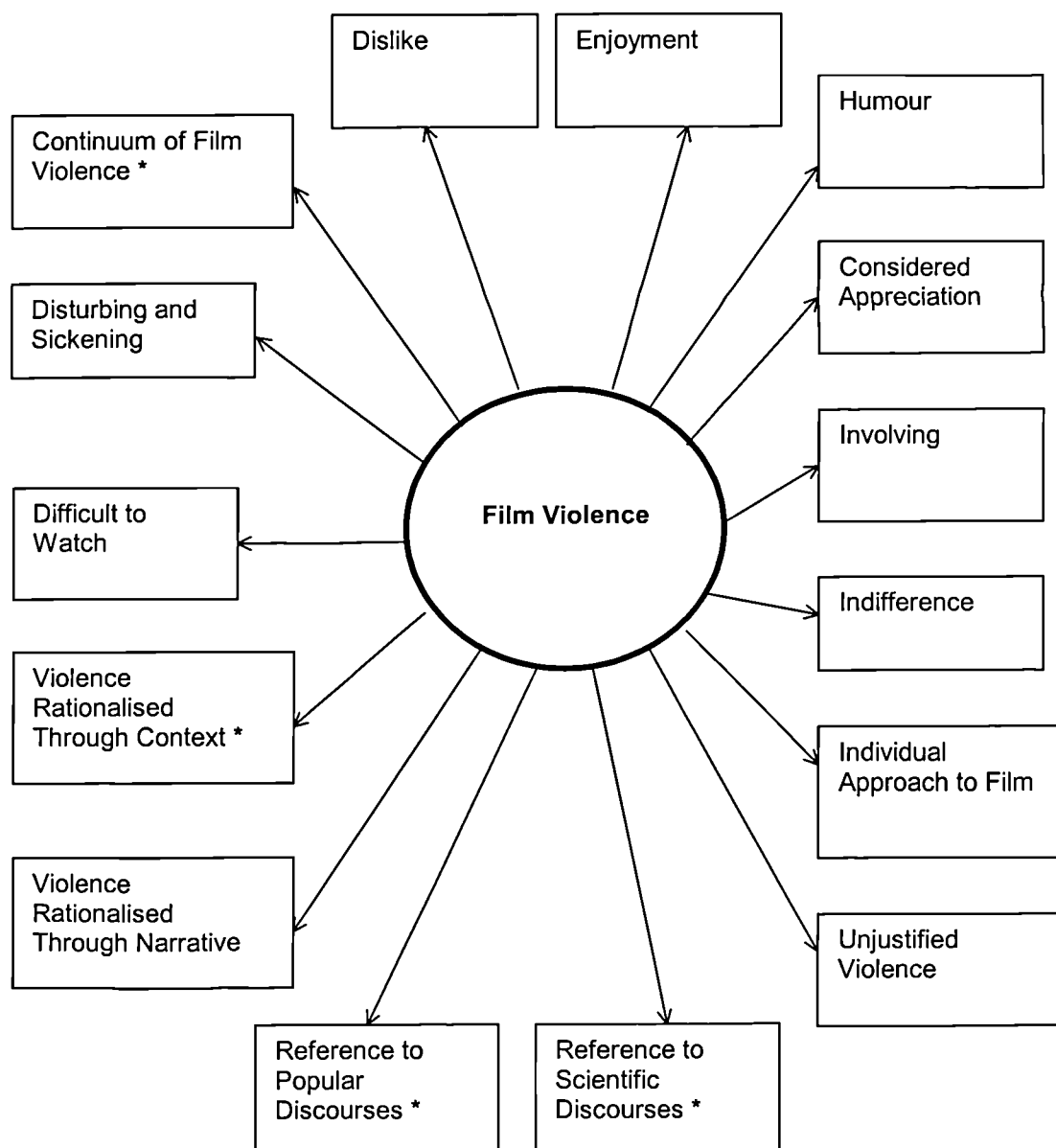
In the third stage of organising themes the objective is to make the data more meaningful in terms of understanding participants' experiences. Themes which deal with comparable material are brought together to form thematic groupings in order to make clear exactly what it is participants are saying about these particular issues. For instance, the themes concerning emotions were grouped together in order to facilitate the analysis of the emotional implications of experiencing film violence. The themes of justification, of realistic versus unrealistic violence, and violence formed another thematic grouping, whilst the themes about accustomisation, amount of violence, children, consequence, fascination, and glorification comprised another. This organisation of themes is invaluable to the next stage of the analysis which involves further analytic interpretation of the data.

The fourth stage of this interpretative phenomenological analysis is coding. Coding requires a thorough study of the thematic data in order to establish the nature of participants' stories of violence. The aim of the analysis now shifts from simply collecting extracts which deal with similar opinions and beliefs to interpreting the data. Two goals are crucial to this stage of the analysis: revealing the discourse which best represents the primary concerns of participants and uncovering answers to the research questions.

Sixteen codes were revealed in this section of Study 2. The number of codes identified signifies the range of devices available to participants when attributing meanings to their experiences of violence via the medium of popular film. It is possible that more or less codes may have emerged with a different sample of film viewers, however, it is unlikely that they would differ greatly in nature. Reference to the findings of Study 1 reveals that there are fundamental similarities between the two, indicating the credibility of the project. For instance, the codes of Study 1 identify the emotional responses to media violence, participants' rationalisations of violence, and issues concerning the consequences of exposure to it, as crucial to the phenomenology of violence. That said, the insights gained in Study 1 have permitted the implementation of a more

advanced analysis which is demonstrated in the network of codes which have evolved from the data in this study. Several of the codes identified in this study are further divided into sub codes which better represent the complexity of the meaning-making process. However, it is important to note that the codes in Study 2, depicted in Diagram 5.1, were established independently from those revealed in the previous study. Those codes which comprise a set of sub codes are indicated with an asterisk (*) and will be elaborated upon where appropriate throughout the course of the chapter.

Diagram 5.1: Film Violence Codes (Study 2)



Each of the codes which have emerged in this study will be discussed in turn. The specific nature of each of these codes and their implications for the meaning-making process will be clarified and exemplified in the following discussion using extracts from the corpus. Although the numbers of participants in these extracts, e.g. P1, P2 etc., are the same as those in Study 1 they are not the same people but are taken from a different sample. In addition, it is helpful to bear in mind that in their discourse about film violence participants on occasions refer to films as texts, i.e. *Reservoir Dogs* as a complete experiential package, but on others they are talking specifically about one scene which stands out as particularly violent, for instance the rape scene at the end of *The Accused*.

(i) The Continuum of Film Violence

This code is one of those which is further subdivided due to the expansive range of meanings which are attributed to violence by participants in this study. Each of the sub codes is presented in Diagram 5.2.

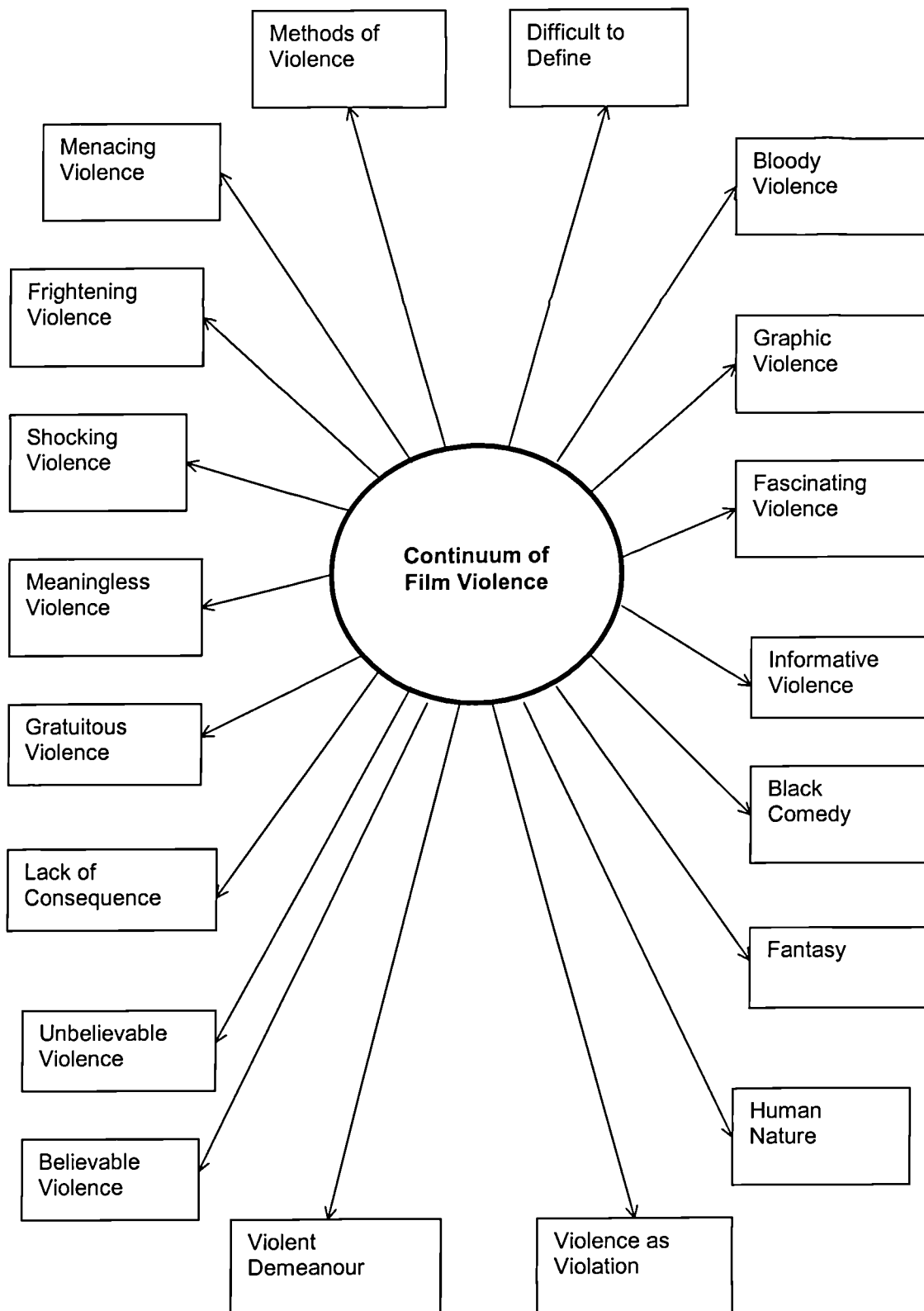
The simplest references to violence are included in the sub code of methods of violence. This includes a range of behaviours such as "someone being blown up" (P8), "someone getting kicked to a pulp" (P9), "beatings" (P11), and "mental torture (Ps 3, 10, 11). Other examples are described more externally in terms of the consequence of an action, such as "damage either physical or mental" (P5), "seeing people bruising and getting cut in front of you" (P11), and "the gradual deterioration of the body" (P11). Some participants refer to specific instances to describe the nature of film violence, for instance P10 selects a scene from *Pulp Fiction* where Mia Wallis' (Uma Thurman) heart is punctured to revive her from a drug over dose:

P10: "where she'd taken an over dose and they took her to that house and stuck a needle in her chest .. I didn't like that"

Similarly, in the extracts below from the sub code of bloody violence P7 describes a scene from *Scarface*, P10 mentions *Pulp Fiction* once more, and P11 remembers a particularly bloody scene from *Full Metal Jacket*:

P6: "the scene where a bloke gets chainsawed up .. I thought that was disgusting to be honest .. I suppose there is a need for it in a film like that but .. not so graphic .. when there's guts flying around and stuff like that .. it was awful"

Diagram 5.2: Continuum of Film Violence Code and Sub Codes (Study 2)



P10: "I'm just trying to remember the really violent bits in it [. .] where that guy's head is splattered all over the back of the car"

P11: "there's a recruiter who's over weight and the team sergeant gives him so much hell that he shoots the sergeant and then puts the gun in his own mouth and he pulls the trigger and you see him sat in the toilets with the gun in his mouth and the white wall is covered in blood"

Scenes of a comparable nature are remembered by participants in the sub code of graphic violence. For instance P3 illustrates the striking detail of the representations of violence in Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* through a comparison with *Tomorrow Never Dies*:

P3: "Tarantino does it in a good way because when someone gets shot they don't fall down with a neat little hole in their head and lie down and go ugh .. I'm dead blood goes everywhere the car's a mess and half the thing is about cleaning up the mess from the murder .. it's not sanitised it's not made clean it is as gory as it really is .. going back to James Bond when he hits someone they don't scream for hours because their jaw's broken they just fall down and the next time the camera pans round they've completely disappeared .. it's too sanitised it's too clean he says let's look at the violence .. if you cut someone blood goes over here he lies about saying it's - it's hurting and it's great he's not making it pretty this is how nasty life can be if you start playing around with knives and guns"

Similarly P4 describes the opening scenes of *Reservoir Dogs* where Mr Orange (Tim Roth) has been shot in the stomach:

P4: "I have less of a problem with something like *Reservoir Dogs* because it's about the on-going injuries of one person .. a lot of people had trouble with Tim Roth's character and the pool of blood getting bigger .. but I thought that was realistic and how it is .. I have less of a problem with that than something like *The Terminator* where life is very cheap and people just get blown away two a penny"

Two other sub codes are touched upon here, fantasy and believable violence. P11 uses *LA Confidential* in his own separation between these two types of violence, which he then compares to *Die Hard*:

P11: "it's a good film *LA Confidential* to split what I feel because there's plenty of shootings when you think oh whatever and there's actual beatings and pain with human people that starts to really sicken me [. .] a good example in *LA Confidential* the two main characters are

fighting in the office before they end up working together and he's banging Guy Pearce's head on a filing cabinet and his face is starting to cut [. .] things like *Die Hard* they're just comedy .. in that there's things like bombs going off and more bullets fired than the entire British army fire in a year and nobody really gets hurt .. there's just people lying there with a dazed expression on their face and a little blood mark on their shirt .. it's not true life and it's something so that your brain in my opinion just instantly dismisses it"

The above examples suggest that those participants prefer violence which is bloody and believable. Not everyone agrees however, P9 prefers the fantastical violence of *The Terminator* to that in *Pulp Fiction*:

P8: "*The Terminator* yes I liked that because that's not real .. you know it's fiction [. .] that's in the realms of fantasy .. there won't be someone like the Terminator walking down the street so I don't mind them .. it's not real .. the others could be real .. well they do happen .. I think that's the difference really [. .] that's the difference *Pulp Fiction* could happen"

Not all the references to film violence are concerned with the physicality of violence on screen, however. The sub codes of violent demeanour, violence as violation, and menacing violence reveal that participants also find "extreme expressions of anger" (P5) and "mental torture" (Ps 3, 10, 11) violent. Examples of menacing violence are given by P3 and P12; P3 refers to *Sleepers*, in which the main characters were abused as young boys; and P12 remembers *A Clockwork Orange*, where Alex (Malcolm McDowell), who is guilty of violent crimes, is released from prison and is then subjected to the violence of experimental treatment:

P3: "what disturbs me as a watcher is characters being put through a situation that they're going to have to live with for the rest of their lives .. it's the concept of knowing there are people out there who have had their lives radically changed and yet who carry on living is probably more brutal because you put yourself in the same position and think .. I don't know if I could live with that"

P12: "*A Clockwork Orange* made an impression I saw it at the cinema a long time ago now but it made an impression .. it had a sense of .. it was violent I just felt it was violent [. .] it was just the sense that violence was there and it was tolerated as a part of life .. it frightened me really"

In the above extracts it is the participants' responses to the films which are conceptualised as menacingly violent on top of the visual display offered in the films. Both *Seven* and *A Clockwork Orange* portray scenes of physical violence, but it is the ambience created within the experiencing of the film which P3 and P12 describe as menacing, rather than the explicit scenes of physical violence, which is then manifest in their responses.

Within the corpus there is an air of uncertainty as to what constitutes violence. This is demonstrated simply by the abundance of sub codes within the code of the continuum of film violence, but one participant stated clearly that she was unsure whether a scene in *Pulp Fiction* matched the common conception of violence:

P10: "I was talking to my boyfriend last night and I said *Pulp Fiction* .. where that guy's head is splattered over the back of the car and he said well is that violent because it was an accident .. he just turns round and it happens .. it was graphic but he didn't do it intentionally .. I don't know whether there's a difference"

That was taken from the difficult to define sub code. The sub code of meaningless violence further exemplifies the difficulties participants have in attributing meaning to film violence. P1 commends *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet* for portraying the meaninglessness of violence generally:

P1: "I thought the violence was valid because it showed the senseless results of groundless family bickerings and it shows the tragedy of young men killing each other for no reason .. except for their fathers' arguments .. the violence was justified because it was in proportion to the message that was being portrayed"

According to P1, the violence in this film fulfilled a function because it portrayed meaningless violence. Hence, *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet* conveyed meaning through a display of meaninglessness. Others, however, recounted simply that they find no such message within some scenes of violence. P6 refers to *Reservoir Dogs* and P9 to *Die Hard*:

P6: "Some of Tarantino's films .. *Reservoir Dogs* .. that was two hours of mindless violence .. so in that case there was no need for it .. it wasn't entertaining .. it was a waste of film budget .. there wasn't any need for the violence .. I didn't get it"

- P9: "I watched and forgot it .. shoot shoot shoot you know like they all are .. it didn't tell a story .. it didn't do anything for me .. it didn't make me think what awful violence .. it didn't affect me at all .. it was violent but silly useless violence .. like a game .. I wouldn't have minded anybody watching it .. it was just daft like an old cowboy and Indian film .. think they're silly them films"

Nevertheless, in other cases, participants referred to representations of violence as informative and fascinating. Those films which tell stories set within the context of historical events, such as of the Mafia and of the Vietnam war, are considered by participants to include scenes of informative violence. For instance, P2 describes *GoodFellas*, and P13 stresses the informative aspects of *The Deer Hunter*.

- P2: "others said there was too much violence and too much swearing .. but that's presenting how these people were .. if there wasn't the violence and the swearing it wouldn't draw peoples' attention .. if you watch those films you're interested in their life .. you're observing how these people's lives are .. you're observing a different life to your own .. the way it's presented is really interesting"
- P13: "that I thought was informed and I thought everybody who hadn't been to war or didn't know anything about war could have done with seeing that really because it made you understand that war is not something glamorous and pretty and heroic .. modern warfare is just horrendous and the cruelty of those that are caught"

In the sub code of fascinating violence, P5 begins by speaking about *Kalifornia* before he elaborates upon the alluring qualities of film violence, and P8 describes a film broadcast on BBC television, *Sybil*, but what they find fascinating is different:

- P5: "sometimes you get there'll be some kind of violence .. a punch or something and everyone goes [he cringes and groans] you can kind of feel it yourself .. it's like if you're watching a boxing match and you see a punch that really connects and you know that hurt .. you can see it it hurt .. at the same time it's funny to watch .. well not funny but you're kind of drawn towards it [. .] you watch a really good hard core violent film and it's all exposed at the plot at the end .. it's interesting you're glued to the screen"
- P8: "I sat there gripping my hand thinking how can somebody behave like that [. .] I wanted to turn it off because I was thinking this is awful but I couldn't because I wanted to know what happened"

It is the physicality of the violence which P5 is drawn to but P8's fascination is more closely aligned to the human qualities of those who perpetrate violence. This curiosity

within participants' experiencing of violent film is represented in the sub code of human nature. Both P2, discussing *Casino*, and P5, who refers to *La Haine* and *Schindler's List*, are intrigued by the kinds of characters who commit violence such as that seen on screen:

P2: "I was struck by how evil these people are and the awful things they were doing and I realised that these were probably the methods they used and what makes them do that to another human being .. it gives you an insight into the way the Mafia works .. it adds to the realism"

P5: "*La Haine* a French film about an inner city youth .. films that portray real life .. that's kind of the dark side of life .. it's a really good film [. . .] *Schindler's List* .. that's a disturbing film .. a very disturbing film actually .. I've done a course recently so I knew a lot about it already and I find it interesting in a kind of dark kind of way to see what people are capable of .. I don't think they were evil or anything I think they were just following orders that's what people do .. it depends what kind of orders are given"

The above statements suggest that participants find film violence compelling, despite defining it as disturbing.

(ii) Considered Appreciation

Moving on from the continuum of film violence, the second code of considered appreciation confirms that a number of participants do appreciate sometimes disturbing film violence. This code is confirmed by Barker and Brooks (1998) who propose that films are sometimes appreciated in spite of their scenes of violence. P4 tells of how she watched *Reservoir Dogs* as part of a short course on film:

P4: "the leader of the group asked at the end if anyone could say they enjoyed it and I found I had enjoyed it almost on an intellectual level but with detachment from the violence within it .. because it stood quite well as a film"

P9 shows the same kind of appreciation of *The Accused*, even though she was upset by it:

P9: "*The Accused* was very violent but I had to watch it .. in fact I watched it two or three times [. . .] it was an excellent film [. . .] I was very angry indeed I cried .. it was ghastly .. one of the best films I've seen that and it sticks with you"

(iii) Enjoyment

Participants' enjoyment of violent film is also expressed in the codes of enjoyment, humour, and involving. Firstly, the code of enjoyment simply contains those phrases participants used to express their pleasure of certain violent films. For example, P5 tells how he enjoyed *Good Morning Vietnam*, P6 refers to *Lethal Weapon*, P10 to *Taxi Driver*, and P11 to *LA Confidential*:

P5: "I thought that was a really good film"

P6: "there's a lot of humour in it so you don't find it as distressing as true life stories .. it's entertainment .. I like films that you don't have to think about ones where you can just forget your troubles and enjoy it"

P10: "he goes mad doesn't he .. society does his head in .. I could see how it could happen to people .. especially in America .. I thought it was very well acted put across pretty well"

P11: "fantastic film that"

Two others in the sample (Ps 2 and 12), however, disclosed their uncertainty about whether the word "enjoy" is appropriate when discussing violent film. This is a recurring theme in the literature and it is linked to the existent discourses of violence. The extracts below demonstrate an awareness that the majority of individuals will avoid using the word enjoy rather than be chastised for admitting enjoyment of violent film, which is considered as harmful and immoral in the current mythologies of the media (Barker and Brooks, 1998; Buckingham, 1996):

P2: "sometimes the point of the film isn't for you to enjoy it .. but I always use the word enjoy because if you like it and you were entertained by it .. you enjoyed it"

P12: "it enables you to see how people are .. perhaps how I am [. .] it can be like holding up a little picture of life for you and we don't always enjoy what we're confronted with .. but you kind of sense .. it might be good for your soul to see some of these things .. to be led where the film's leading you and if it helps you to think more clearly about yourself and the choices that you make it can be good [. .] sometimes the truth - learning the truth about yourself is not enjoyable"

These extracts are significant to this project in terms of understanding what it is that individuals gain from experiencing violence via the medium of film. P12 in particular

suggests that there is some ulterior motive in watching such material which may be to discover something about the self. More obviously, the code of humour reveals that some participants are amused by violent film.

(iv) Humour

This was an unexpected code due to both the common conception of violence as an anti-social behaviour which causes pain and suffering for those involved and the negative responses to it which make up a large part of participants' accounts. Nevertheless, some of the films discussed evoke reactions of humour. This could be described as the grotesque, i.e. that the humour which is injected into scenes of sometimes horrific violence has the function of relieving the tension that has built up through the unpleasant nature of the violence (Warner, 1998). This is illustrated in several participants' accounts; P3 was amused by *An American Werewolf In London*, P5 describes *Casino* as an exposé of dark humour, and P10 refers to *Trainspotting*, especially the character Begby (Robert Carlisle), as a funny film:

P3: " *An American Werewolf In London* which is pretty gruesome .. you see people ripped to pieces arms flying around .. yet when I described it to my friends it was funny .. it's a great movie and it's funny"

P5: "Jo Pesci .. after he squeezes this bloke's head in a vice and makes him pop - his eye .. just to tell him a little name and I think that's really dark humour and I find that kind of amusing"

P10: "I thought it was a quite funny film actually [. .] I thought he were dead funny .. he - just really amusing .. where he'd jump up and start having a go at those people .. to be honest I took it fairly light-heartedly"

(v) Involving

The code of involving reveals that participants become actively involved in watching film; the stories told by these films and the characters within them were such that they demanded the participants' full attention. For instance, P2 describes *Silence of the Lambs*, *Seven*, and *Copycat*, as involving films:

P2: "you don't actually see any of the people actually being killed .. like *Silence of the Lambs* and *Seven* [. .] you think about how it's happened and how somebody could do that to somebody else and it's that strong that without seeing it you're really thinking about what's going on [. .] you get involved in the mystery trying to work

out who did it and everything .. it has to be good to draw your attention .. *Copycat* was similar to *Seven* [. .] the sort of films where you don't actually see much violence but you're aware of what's happened .. a sign of a good film is if you can interact with it and get involved with the characters and everything"

Equally, however, participants were unimpressed by some films. The ways in which these films are experienced is encapsulated in the codes of dislike and indifference.

(vi) Dislike

The majority of extracts in the code of dislike were about violent films in general. However, reference to the previous codes will show that both P10 and P13 have enjoyed violent film:

P7: "I tend to shy away from violent films - well excessively violent films"

P10: "people like violent movies and the action packed movies if they've got a gun in it then I'm not really - because it doesn't appeal to me [. .] these action films I don't really enjoy"

P13: "they don't appeal to me you know gratuitous violence to me is pointless .. I don't find any excitement in that at all because it's not a satisfactory way of life"

(vii) Indifference

Similarly, the code of indifference reveals that participants find what they describe as action films uninvolved. P2 refers to *Face/Off*, P4 to *The Terminator* and *Die Hard*, and P9 first speaks of *Die Hard* and then *Reservoir Dogs*:

P2: "the action was uninvolved"

P4: "I would not be interested in the subject matter .. the violence becomes so ordinary"

P9: "it didn't tell a story it didn't do anything for me .. I think they're silly them - daft [. .] I watched half of it and I thought it was silly awful .. I thought it was unreal"

This dissatisfaction with violent film is taken further in the code of disturbing and sickening. However, the previously discussed code of considered appreciation shows that sometimes participants are disturbed or sickened by scenes within a film which, as a whole, they experience positively. This is the case in the examples taken from the disturbing code.

(viii) Disturbing and Sickening

As disclosed above P10 enjoyed *Trainspotting* to the point that she found some scenes funny, at the same time she was disturbed by it; and P11 described *Full Metal Jacket* positively, yet he was sickened by one particular scene:

P10: "the only thing that upset me really about that was the baby - seeing the dead baby and they were all smacked up on the floor [. .] it was a strange feeling when you saw it and you saw that girl screaming and picking the baby up .. that upset me I didn't expect it"

P11: "it sickens me I think I'm a little queasy and maybe - and you're looking at it and you feel actually physically sick [. .] I can feel myself trying to imagine what's happening to that body [. .] I can feel my stomach creasing and starting to feel sick and the pain must be intense"

Others in the sample, nevertheless, were sickened to the extent that it outweighed any positive emotions, for instance, P8 describes *Seven*:

P8: "the idea of showing it on the screen was disgusting [. .] the last part when you realise he's killed his wife .. that's disgusting I just don't find it entertaining [. .] I can't understand why people enjoy watching that sort of thing .. some people like to be frightened they enjoy the thrill of it - I don't like it it turns my stomach"

These accounts of feeling nauseous when watching scenes of violence, which are supported by Hill (1997), stress the physicality and intensity of responses to film violence.

Thus far, participants' coded discourse has revealed the complex ways in which violence is defined in different circumstances and the varied nature of responses to it. The remainder of the codes to be discussed are concerned with participants' evaluations of film violence in a wider sense. For instance, the codes of violence rationalised through narrative and violence rationalised through context show the ways in which representations of violence are legitimated by participants.

(ix) Violence Rationalised Through Narrative

This code represents instances when participants tolerate scenes of sometimes horrific violence because, in their view, the film's story would not be complete without them.

For example, P4 rationalises the violence in both *Reservoir Dogs* and *The Godfather* through their narrative, as P6 does with *The Accused*:

- P4: "I don't have a problem with violence in films if it's legitimate within the scheme of the plot [. . .] a lot of people had trouble with Tim Roth's character and the pool of blood getting bigger but I thought that was realistic and how it is [. . .] it's the same with *The Godfather* films because the high level of violence is explained by the plot and justified by the film"
- P6: "sometimes violence helps get a story across .. *The Accused* you had to show the rape because that's what the whole film is about"

This code is crucial in understanding the ways in which participants attribute meanings to their experiences of violence because it reveals that representations of violence are not viewed in isolation but are considered within the narrative of the film. The above extracts show that the violence in these films is acceptable to these participants because it fits coherently into the stories they tell.

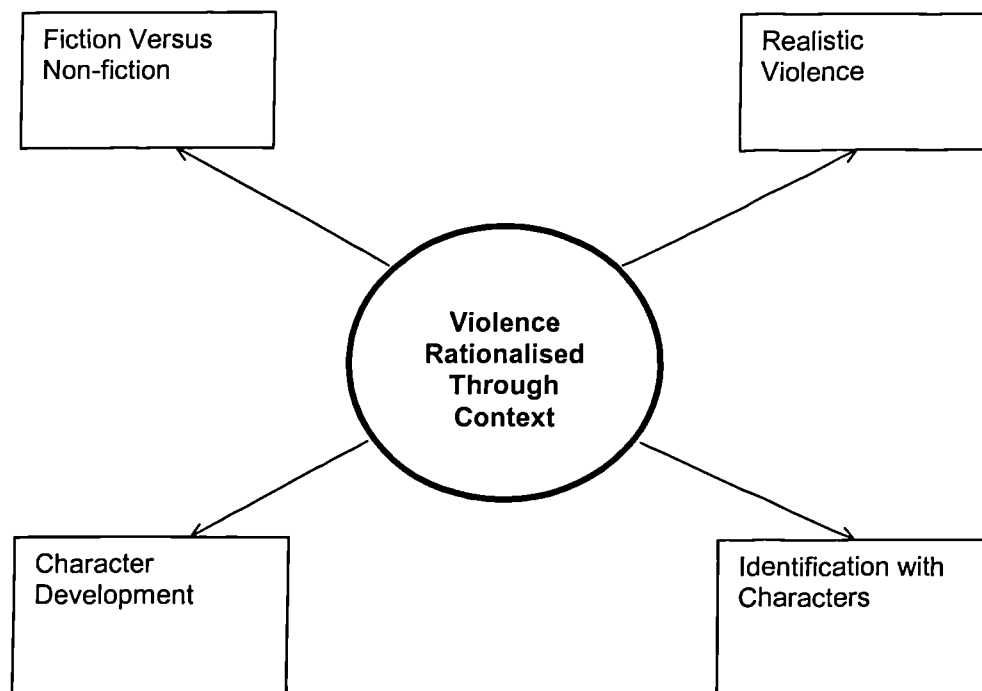
(x) Violence Rationalised Through Context

The code of violence rationalised through context is somewhat more complex and so is divided into a series of sub codes. The sub codes within this code illustrate the variety of contextual factors offered by participants as justification for violence. These are depicted in Diagram 5.3.

The fiction versus non-fiction sub code contains examples where violent images are rationalised in both cases, i.e. because a film is fiction and because a film tells a story of a real life event. P3 legitimates fictional representations of violence because they can be watched more comfortably, while P4 finds the rationalisation of non-fiction violence easier:

- P3: "when a film is fiction you can watch it more comfortably because some producer has thought of this and made a film .. no problem .. when they choose to make a true story the producer becomes biographer a historian and you can't say oh this would never happen because it has happened [. . .] because you can't step back and down play what you're seeing"
- P4: "it does make a difference if a film is a true story because so many of these films are blatantly unreal situations or are beyond your experience .. but something like a woman walking into a bar .. getting raped is something that goes on"

Diagram 5.3: Violence Rationalised Through Context Code and Sub Codes (Study 2)



Similarly, some participants legitimate the presence of violence in films if it is portrayed in a realistic manner. For example P5 rationalises the violence in *Reservoir Dogs*:

P5: "it depends on how it's done really [. . .] some films .. like *Reservoir Dogs* that's much more violent .. it's more believable [. . .] that bloke gets shot in the stomach and he's lying there for two days or whatever and you can believe that would happen .. you wouldn't die from a stomach wound .. or you would die really slowly"

The realism of scenes of violence is something which was identified as significant by Morrison et al (1999). In fact, scenes which were more realistic were considered by their participants as involving a greater sense of violence. The other kinds of justification offered by participants concern the characters within the films they describe as violent. The sub code of character development includes P2's justification of *Nil By Mouth* because it told the story of an abusively violent man. P5 tolerates the violence in *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* in the same way:

P2: "recently I saw *Nil By Mouth* and I could actually believe that could happen .. there are people like that in every town .. everywhere in

the world and that's how they live their lives [. . .] when Ray beats up his wife .. you know he's a brutal man [. . .] right at the beginning when he's ordering drinks you know he's capable of violence because of his short temper .. there's not much violence in the film but you're expecting it to happen at any moment .. even when he turns up when she's playing pool .. he takes her away and you think it's going to be later now"

P5: "I thought why are you showing this not to show off the violence or anything it was an investigation into serial killers and the minds of murderers and stuff it was good"

Similarly, the sub code of identification with characters reveals that participants legitimate violence in film if the characters are believable and they can relate to them. P6 identified with the characters in *Once Were Warriors* through an equally painful personal experience, while P10 relates to Jodie Foster's character in *The Accused* because she is a woman:

P6: "the character was getting drunk and always taking his anger out on his wife and the way that was portrayed it disturbed me quite a lot because that sort of thing happens a lot and I could relate to that myself"

P10: "seeing the woman getting gang raped it upset me really because you could imagine yourself in that position"

Thus far the codes have revealed a variety of ways in which participants attribute meanings to their experiences of film violence. The similarities amongst participants' accounts reflect the availability of such mechanisms as narrative, context, amusement, and disturbance which are adopted in the process of narrativising experience. At the same time, however, the differences which have been highlighted in this discussion stress that the experience itself is unique to each individual. The final codes of film violence, reference to popular discourses and reference to scientific discourses, further illustrate the interaction within participants' accounts between external and internal components of experiencing violence: whilst the establishment of codes has successfully demonstrated the shared, external qualities of experiencing violence, the idiosyncratic, internal aspects of individual cases remain to infiltrate the discourse. In other words, both the social and the personal are at work when experiences of violence are made meaningful.

(xi) Reference to Popular and Scientific Discourses

Like other researchers in the field (Barker and Brooks, 1998; Buckingham, 1996), the interpretative phenomenological analysis in this study revealed that a significant number of participants referred to existing ideologies and hypotheses concerning the phenomenon of media violence in expressing their beliefs about it. Many issues of this nature have circulated in the public arena through articles in the press and television programmes such as the news and documentaries. A discourse analysis was conducted, utilising such press articles in conjunction with past psychological studies (as documented in Chapter 2), in order to ascertain the range of discourses, or interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), available to participants in their own meaning-making processes. A complete account of the discourse analysis is in Appendix 4.7, the results of which are shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Discourses of Media Violence (Study 2)

Popular Discourses	Scientific Discourses
Audience Demands TV/Film Culture Fascination with Violence Glorification of Violence Knee Jerk Response Too Much Violence in the Media Violence and the Media Violent Society	Anti-Effects Causal Effects Desensitisation to Violence Effects on Children Existential Needs Fear of Violent Crime Function of Film Perception and Meaning of Violence Predisposed to Violence Pressure Valve Qualified Effects Violent Drive

Not all the discourses identified were referred to by participants, nevertheless a substantial amount were. In order to contextualise the following discussion of participants' talk from the codes of reference to popular and scientific discourses, here are some examples from the texts analysed (the full discourse analysis is in Appendix 4.7). The popular discourse of too much violence in the media, for instance, is represented by this quote taken from an article in *The Guardian* newspaper:

"Recently, a national violence summit was held to denounce the usual suspects and plead with television networks to slightly cut back on the torrent of blood and guts that seeps through our cathode tubes. What was

amazing was the arrogance of the television executives who hardly bothered to plead artistic licence or First Amendment rights before they grudgingly allowed for a possibility, in some remote future, of labelling TV programmes as unfit for children."

(Sigal, 1993)

The language used in this extract exemplifies the negative way in which media violence is viewed by the public. In addition, the "television executives" are painted as the villains in the piece who, according to Sigal should be protecting television audiences from such "blood and guts". The discourse, knee jerk response, similarly represents negative reactions to media violence which are particularly naïve or made without serious contemplation, for instance:

"Since the attempts to censor David Cronenberg's *Crash* any film which attempts to tackle sex and violence feels threatened with a ban."

(Darke, 1997)

"Historically, scares about television have always been about brainwashing, particularly of children and women, who are assumed to be more susceptible. But the people who say this are usually men, intellectuals and politicians, who of course have every confidence that they themselves can watch what they like without these effects."

(Dr Seiter, quoted by Lacey, 1998)

However, many examples of the fascination with violence discourse were uncovered in the articles analysed. These extracts discuss film violence in a more positive light, for instance, in *The Times Magazine*, O'Hagan discusses *Reservoir Dogs*:

"the now infamous "ear-slicing scene" in which a suitably chilling Michael Madsen performs some brutal psycho-surgery [. .] has already become one of the key images of Nineties cinema and, more than any other scene, exemplifies Tarantino's talent for surreal, often disturbing, juxtapositions."

(O'Hagan, 1994)

The scientific discourses identified in the analysis likewise represent a mixture of positive and negative ideologies about media violence. The causal effects discourse includes the largest proportion of excerpts from both press articles and scientific literature. The conviction of this discourse is that media violence has a negative causal effect on its audience, as shown below:

"The pattern is now well-established. A horrific crime occurs. The perpetrators are caught and their trial fails to give any satisfactory answer to the question why. So the cry goes up: find the guilty video."

(Edgar, 1997)

"Pleas from parents, politicians and viewer groups that television should end its obsession with violence have fallen on deaf ears [. . .] A panel of broadcasters and TV watchdogs has decided that no action is needed to curb the death and mayhem on our screens."

(Poulter, 1998)

Other examples are directly opposed to the conception of the effects hypothesis, as revealed in the anti-effects discourse:

"Dr Charlton says it is "morally convenient" and that it is easier to blame television for society's ills than blame ourselves."

(Lacey, 1998)

"The difficulty comes when we note how much fiction addresses the extremes of life: not just the zeniths, but the nadirs. It's true that fiction often shows acts of wickedness in order to discourage them; but if "go thou and do likewise" is a crudely simplistic view of the effects of fiction, then so is "don't do this at home"."

(Edgar, 1997)

The fear of violent crime discourse is another identified in the analysis, which is referred to by participants. The essence of this discourse is that exposure to television violence will increase fear in the audience, as illustrated in Gerbner's scientific research:

"We have found that the differential ratios of symbolic victimisation among women and minorities on television cultivate different levels of insecurity among their real-life counterparts, a 'hierarchy of fears' that confirms and tends to perpetuate their dependent status."

(Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorelli, 1986)

Participants in this study also refer to the discourse of function of film, exemplified in this extract from *The Guardian*:

"The telling and hearing of stories is not an optional extra or a trivial pursuit. It is central to our being as humans. Certain crucial aspects of humanness could not exist without it. The most obvious - and the most obviously banal - is our capacity to imagine other worlds and other times through stories told either from or about them."

(Edgar, 1997)

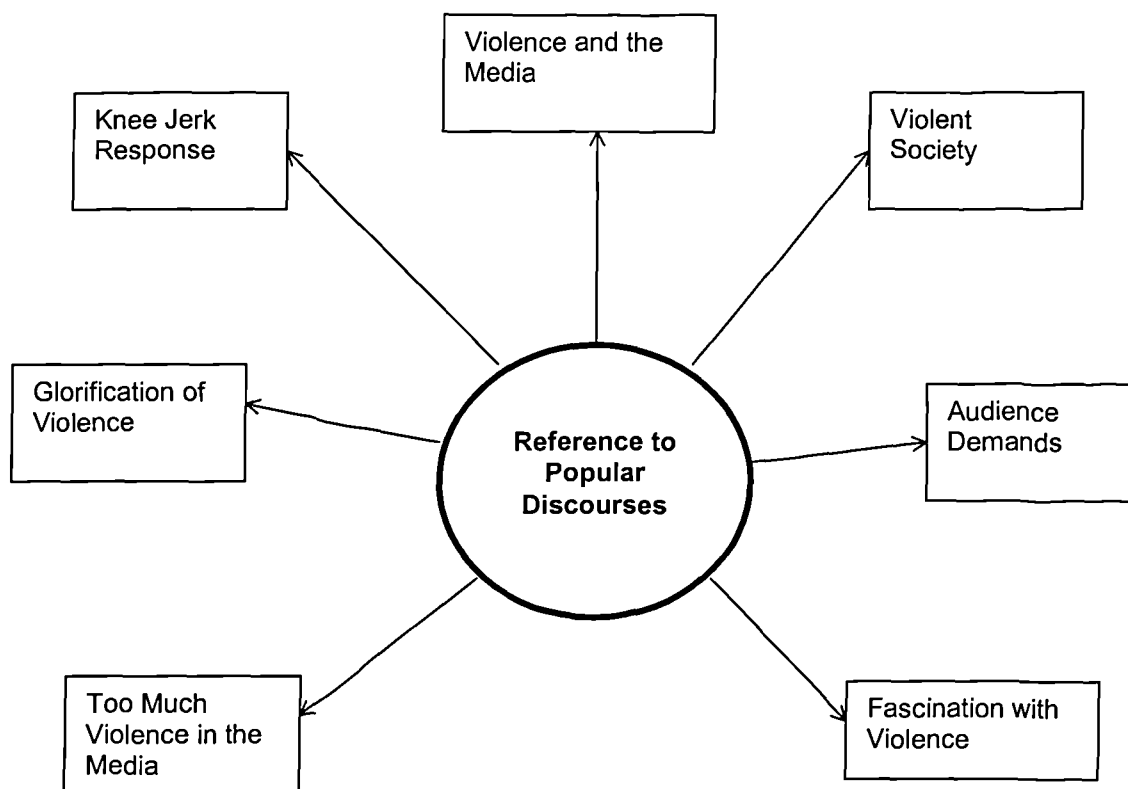
Both the popular and scientific discourses identified in this brief analysis reveal a range of belief systems at work in contemporary society which are available to the public. They contain ideologies which are against the portrayal of violence in the visual media together with those which support its presence. The discourses identified in the analysis can be confirmed by the fact that several participants refer to them in their accounts of experiencing film violence. This will be illustrated by evaluating the codes of reference to popular discourses and reference to scientific discourses and their sub codes. Firstly, Diagrams 5.4 contains the sub codes which have been uncovered in the code of reference to popular discourses, the names of which are synonymous with the established interpretative repertoires revealed in the discourse analysis.

The sub code of too much violence in the media reflects the view that simply film and television contains an excessive amount of representations of violence:

P2: "there's violence in everything you turn on on the television"

P11: "everything has to have violence unfortunately [. . .] you have to have your token bit of violence in it now"

Diagram 5.4: Reference to Popular Discourses Code and Sub Codes (Study 2)



The glorification of violence sub code reveals that participants seriously consider the social consequences of film violence which is packaged in a glamorous way. P4 refers to *Natural Born Killers*:

P4: "I was concerned about how glamorous it made the perpetrators look"

However, others believe that film violence is so dominant within contemporary popular culture because that is what the audience requires, demonstrated in the sub code of audience demands:

P1: "if these things do happen then those who are mature enough to consider them should be able to see them in their full bloody glory"

P5: "I suppose there's loads of violence in films because that's what people want to watch"

Others refer to the opposing hypothesis that film reflects a social reality which was violent in the first case, demonstrated in the discourse of violent society:

P9: "there' so much violence already about"

P13: "I think the rot was in society long before it was reflected in films really"

Participants do not simply regurgitate the dominant discourses concerning media violence but are actively aware of the controversial political debate which surrounds the issues. The sub code of media and society includes evidence to this effect:

P3: "Tarantino goes out to make a stir and he's good at making people react .. unfortunately he's gone so far down that line that the reaction is one of horror .. he does it in a good way [. .] I hesitate to predict the media's reaction because they will say anything .. unfortunately the tabloids sell the most and they just want to make something out of it .. they're not standing moral high ground .. Tarantino is courting this reaction because he knows it will sell more seats .. I don't have a problem with that"

Similarly the sub code of knee jerk response indicates that some participants are of the opinion that the decision to take mediated violence off the screen is misplaced:

P2: "in this country they ban films because of what might happen not what has actually happened .. they try to attribute everything that happens in society to a film and that's ridiculous in my opinion because if you're going to do that you may as well ban *Tom and Jerry* cartoons because that's the most violent thing you see on television [. .] they banned *Crash* in Westminster without actually seeing it it's like living in a dictatorship"

P6: "people shouldn't be able to make that decision for you .. it's only a film but if people want to watch they should be able to"

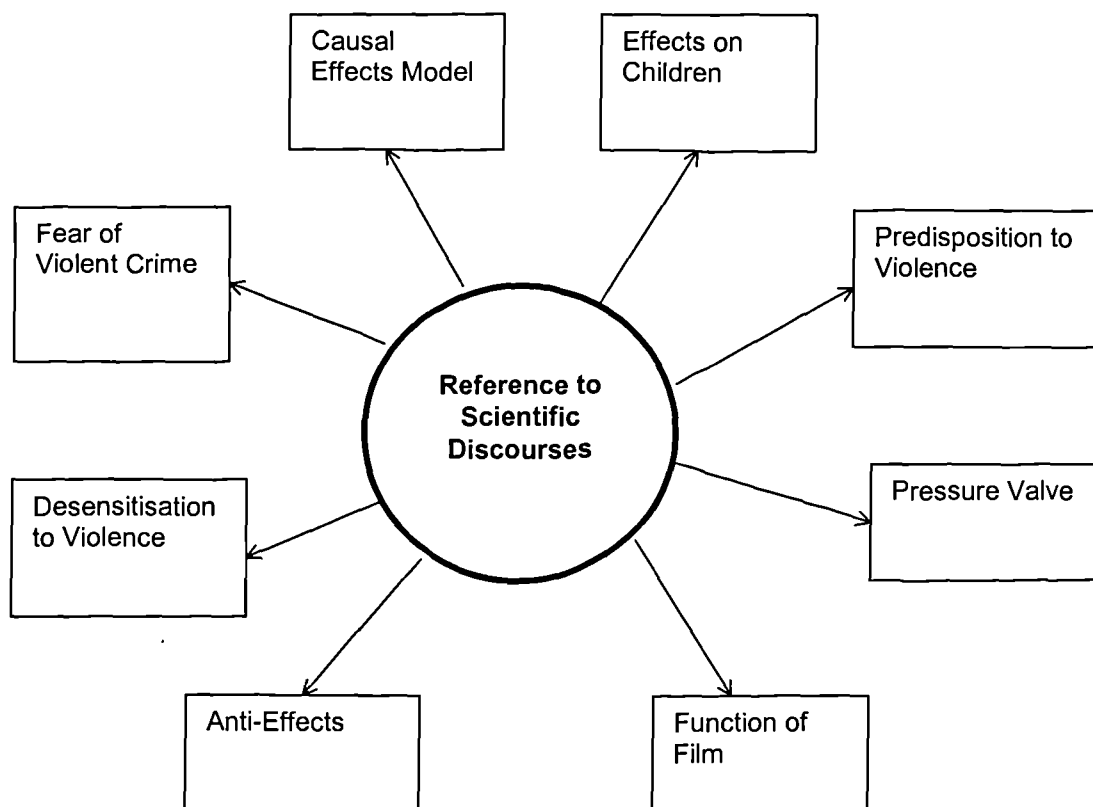
Finally within this code is the sub category of fascination with violence. This is an issue which is not easily broached and few participants describe film violence as fascinating, however, some suggest the existence of an overriding allure of violence:

P9: "I've been reading a book about the eighteen hundreds and there was far more violence going on then than there is now and that was just a little corner of London in Spittlefieds and Whitechapel and the things they used to do .. and what they used to do to witches and - it's always gone on and if you read books about it it's just the same"

thing only they're showing it on videos now so you can watch it .. then they just did it [. .] and them that think there won't be anymore violence and think they will stop it they're in la la land aren't they because I don't think they will [. .] you can't say it'll be a wonderful world soon .. all this is going to stop .. it won't stop will because it's never stopped .. it started with Adam and Eve"

Participants' adoption of popular discourses in their accounts is not surprising, after all they are an integral part of the public community. Reference to scientific discourses, however, is something which was not expected to the same level. This code reveals participants' awareness of the issues surrounding media violence which have been the topic of scientific investigation for a number of decades. Diagram 5.5 shows which of these discourses are included in participants' experiential accounts.

Diagram 5.5: Reference to Scientific Discourses Code and Sub Codes (Study 2)



The discourse analysis confirmed that the dominant discourse within the scientific community is that of causal effects. Many participants revealed an awareness of this ideology during their discussions about film violence. None of the issues raised by the causal effects discourse were introduced by the researcher in the interview, therefore

the following examples of references to it are unprompted. This in itself illustrates that the effects discourse is well established within contemporary culture, even to the extent that film viewers are concerned about the consequences of watching violent material, an observation which is supported by Buckingham (1996) and Barker (1989). The following transcript extracts illustrate that participants are aware of the effects hypothesis, i.e. that watching violence on screen leads to actual violent behaviour:

P3: "I feel more outraged by something like *Trainspotting* .. taking heroin .. I wouldn't have known how to take heroin but I've seen someone with a spoon .. heating the stuff up etceteras and I've got that information from television [. .] it's when violence leads to violence [. .] I do think it's possible .. there was a case this week .. that was a one off and shouldn't be taken as specific reason to stop showing violence in movies"

P12: "I have read that there isn't much evidence to suggest that people watching violence on the television then go out and commit violence but I still side with the common sense view that that which you see and observe it is likely to affect your behaviour .. and if that which we observe has so little influence why do the advertisers spend so much on television advertisements if it has so little influence on us"

P13: "I'm sure what people see on tv can influence them"

In fact, participants express concern about a number of issues. Whether audiences will imitate what is seen on the screen or whether representations of violence will influence the decision-making process in future behaviour feature frequently. The influence of watching violent film is assumed to be a negative one which is compared to the efficacy of advertising by P12. What participants find even more worrying is that children will learn violent behaviour through their consumption of violent media, reflected in the sub code of effects on children:

P3: "it's the same with bad language if people use it on tv children will just copy it .. children are the ultimate copy cats"

P4: "if it got into the hands of children there would be a problem because of the constancy and level of violence in it was really high"

P6: "children shouldn't be exposed to a lot of violence [. .] they should be sheltered from it until they're old enough to understand what it's all about"

The above extracts demonstrate that some participants are in accordance with the mainstream ideology that children are innocents and therefore should not be exposed

to the destructive side of human nature. On top of this the issue of imitation is stressed once more. However, some have problems with the causal effects model of media violence, due to its simplicity, as shown in the sub code of predisposition to violence:

- P8: "you don't know whether that's an excuse for their behaviour whether they would have gone out and actually committed a crime without actually copying something they'd seen .. I think if it's in you anyway you'd do it anyway [. .] I think it's something inside you already .. I don't know - I don't think we'll ever know why"
- P9: "not a normal person but you don't know who's normal do you [. .] I don't think ordinary people watching a film could do it but I think some people would because there are copy cat murders and like serial killers [. .] I don't think seeing a film would make anybody do it if they weren't abnormal to begin with"

The anti-effects discourse rejects the occurrence of a causal effect between watching violent media and behaving violently in real life, which is also reflected in participants' accounts, for instance:

- P2: "it's not as if it's putting the thought in your mind to go and do it"
- P3: "the controversy about *Crash* is off the wall because I can't see many people taking part in this sort of activity [. .] it wasn't going to start a new trend"
- P4: "I would be surprised if there was a strong link between a film and someone copying what they've seen .. there would be other factors"

The sub code of fear of violent crime depicts participants' knowledge of the hypothesis that over-representation of violence on screen can lead to an increased fear of crime, as illustrated by P3's comment:

- P3: "it also makes us more frightened .. violence is not endemic on our streets [. .] but we fear it because we see it so much on television"

Participants are also aware of the frequently posed argument that increased exposure to film violence will result in the audience being desensitised to violence. This is reflected in participants' beliefs that screen violence will cease to be shocking because of its already pervasive presence:

- P2: "people feel that the more violence they can watch the more they become desensitised and the more they can watch in a film"

P4: "a few years ago that might have been an eighteen but now because people want to make it wider the level of violence that is acceptable in a fifteen film is a lot higher than it was when I was fifteen"

P12: "we're conditioned to tolerate it now [. . .] I think we've become numb to violence [. . .] we just watch it we've become numb to it all .. I fear so because we see so much of it"

The last few discourses identified in the texts studied are also represented in the participants' accounts, but are not as dominant as those above. For example, two participants suggest that watching violent film could act as a pressure valve through which violent energy can be released:

P5: "it's an extreme expression of anger and everyone gets angry all the time - and making violent films or watching violent films is just an expression of that anger .. it's a release as well in a way .. it's like watching comedies you go to the cinema and you come out and think everything's normal again it's an escape that's what it is"

P13: "if it enables someone who knows that they could indulge in violence and it just helps them to live out their fantasy if you lie without actually doing it themselves yes I can see a point to that"

The final sub code within reference to scientific discourses is that of function of film. This set of participants' ideas reflects one of the subordinate discourses of media violence, that watching violent film fulfils a function:

P9: "now I run a youth club and seen all this violence I think I'm better equipped to see to them kids and understand them .. some people say it doesn't do you any good watching them films but when you've seen it and heard about it I do think it helps you .. it's helped me I understand"

P13: "it made me say right just look this is what war's like .. war should not happen .. it was from a peace promotion type view that I look at *The Deer Hunter* .. this is what should never happen so it's an anti-war film to me rather than a war film .. if you see what I mean .. and the consequences that modern warfare has for people"

P13: "maybe for some people they can say well I would watch that because it would make sure I satisfy the aggression I've got in me without actually doing it myself [. . .] if it prevents people from actually becoming violent themselves"

Different functions are suggested by participants including being educated about real life events, learning how to identify with other people, and satisfying a natural aggression. Hence, in spite of all the negative discourses which surround the phenomenon of film violence, there is also a feeling of worthiness attached to violent films in participants' assessments.

The discourse analysis which was prompted by the emergence of these two final codes of film violence, together with the extracts from the codes themselves, illustrate the dependability of the analytic interpretations made. Media violence has been the topic of much public and scientific debate, therefore it is not surprising that several ways of talking about it, manifested in the discourses identified, have established themselves in contemporary culture.

In short, the analysis of film violence in Study 2 has revealed an extensive array of ways in which film violence is made meaningful by its audience. The continuum of film violence code illustrates that film violence is fundamentally an idiosyncratic concept. This code alone provides a credible analysis of film violence, which is then expanded through the interpretation of the following codes. The analysis also found that film violence can be disturbing and sickening yet it can be appreciated with careful consideration of the context in which it is portrayed. Crucially this study has discovered that film violence is rationalised through a number of mechanisms, including the narrative context the film provides, the reality of the representations, the depth of the characters, and the genre of the film. These shared facets of experiencing violence and attributing meanings to it, teamed with the co-existing subjectivities within participants' accounts, are found to make up the phenomenology of film violence.

Real Life Violence

The second half of the interviews focused upon participants' encounters with violence in real life. A variety of events are discussed by participants, each of which they conceive as violent. Table 5.3 offers a straightforward description of these real life encounters with violence which are then elaborated upon throughout the presentation of the interpretative phenomenological analysis.

As in the previous section about film violence, the interpretative phenomenological analysis of experiences of violence in real life follows the stages described in Chapter

3. The initial reading and note-making stage revealed that, as Table 5.3 shows, each participant surprisingly was able to select a real life event which they experienced as violent. Additionally, in this introductory stage the severity of participants' encounters with violence in real life became apparent.

Table 5.3: Participants' Experiences of Violence (Study 2)

P	Sex	Age	Violent Experience
1	M	41-45	He has been involved in a number of violent incidents as a police officer, such as stabbings, road traffic accidents, and violent assaults.
2	M	26-30	He was head butted by the same person twice in a night club and was threatened in a public house.
3	M	36-40	He was attacked whilst at work (as a cinema manager) and had severe injuries.
4	F	31-35	She witnessed a mob attack a man whilst on a bus in Tanzania. Has witnessed several fights in public houses as a teenager.
5	M	18-25	He witnessed a serious fight between two friends who were brothers and has witnessed several fights whilst at school.
6	F	18-25	She was a victim of domestic violence whilst living with her partner, he attempted to strangle her.
7	M	60+	He was an evacuee during world war two. He was involved in the Suez Canal Crisis as a soldier. He shot the man who shot his best friend and was almost shot himself. He was the victim of a road rage incident and was threatened in a public house.
8	F	46-50	She witnessed fights whilst working in bars when she was younger.
9	F	60+	She witnessed domestic violence as child between her step father and mother. She has witnessed people being beaten up on the street and in dance halls where she worked when she was younger. She has spoken on the telephone about and heard violence whilst working as a Samaritan.
10	F	18-25	She was robbed at work and threatened with a knife whilst working as an Off Licence manager.
11	M	18-25	He witnessed football supporters being violent at a railway station. He has witnessed fights in public houses and night clubs and was threatened in a queue for a taxi late at night. He witnessed a man attacking his female partner in the road and split it up.
12	M	46-50	He has experienced violence of language at football matches and in prison as a prison chaplain. He has witnessed fights between youngsters at youth clubs. He feels threatened by violence habitually due to his job as a Methodist Minister.
13	F	56-60	She witnessed a fight on the tube in London. She was attacked by a pupil whilst teaching and she witnessed an attempted robbery outside her home.

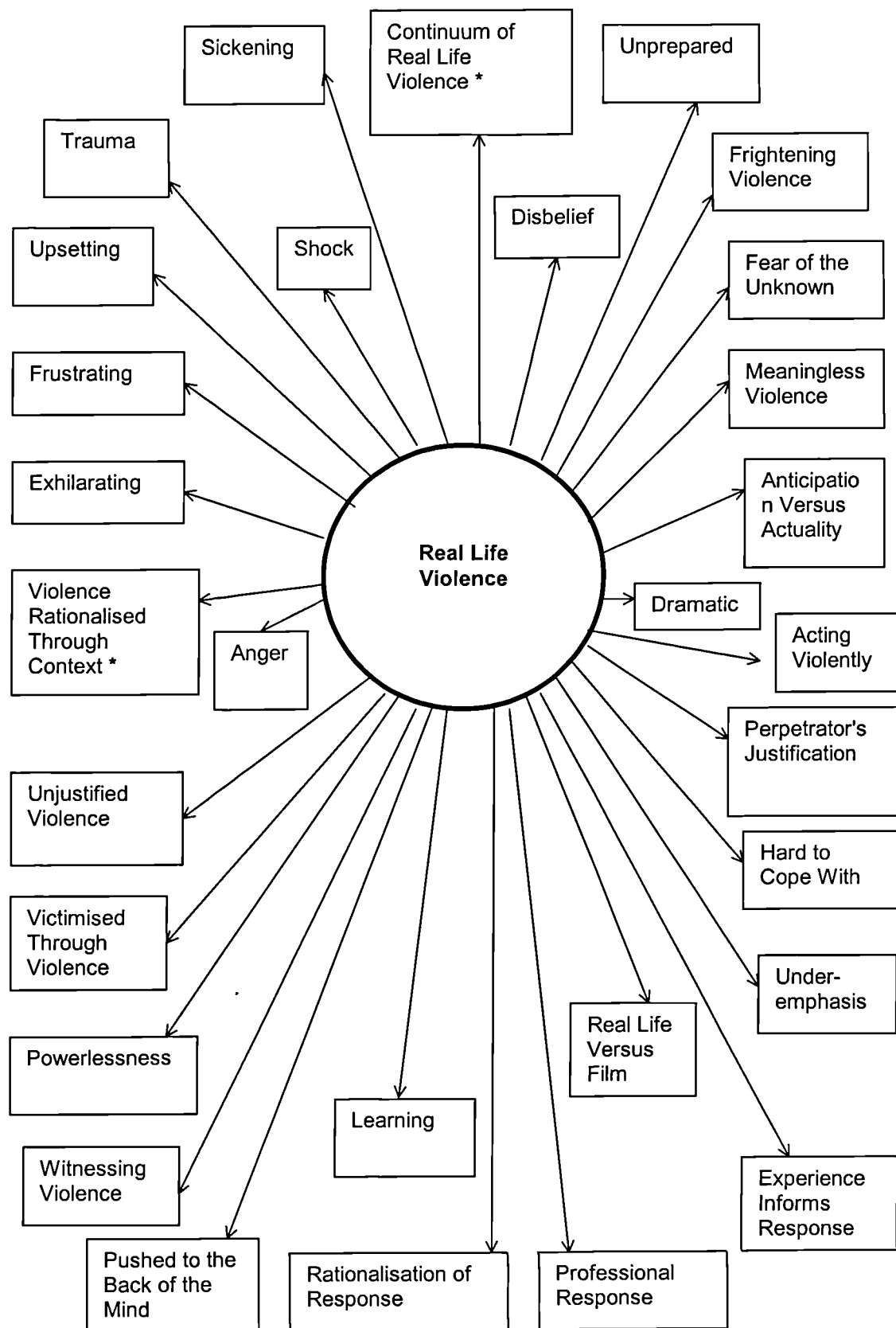
In the second stage of identifying themes eight different themes were revealed within the corpus, these include: emotional response to violence, rationalisation of response, rationalisation of violence, role in the violent event, suddenness of violence, under-emphasising the violent event, violence, and watching the violence. These are fairly

straightforward but some are worthy of further explanation. Participants find ways of rationalising the occurrence of violence, be it real or dramatised, as found in the previous section of this study, and in Study 1. The themes in this study support these findings and also reveal that participants feel obliged to rationalise not only the violence but their response to it. In addition, in some cases participants under-emphasised the description of the violence experienced, despite its obvious severity. The theme of watching the violence stresses the ways in which participants describe how they watched the violence; sometimes this was with curiosity, sometimes with fear. These kinds of interpretations are made cautiously because the depths of emotion are not always directly evident in participants' talk. However, the detail with which events are described and the concern participants express through their evaluations of their reactions to violent events support these conclusions. The fact that these issues were not discussed in greater depth may be due to the context of the research scenario. It is perceivable that in private with a close friend the participants would talk differently than with a psychologist in a recorded interview.

The third stage of the interpretative phenomenological analysis involves organising the themes into meaningful groups. Out of this stage four thematic groupings emerged. The emotional response to violence was grouped with the suddenness of violence, the themes of rationalisation were grouped with the theme covering the role in the event, whilst the under-emphasis of the violence, watching violence and the theme including references to violence per se were each considered sufficiently substantial to form groupings in their own right.

The fourth stage of coding, as outlined in Chapter 3, entails a great deal of interpretative work. Each of the thematic groupings required further in-depth readings in order to establish which emotions were most significantly expressed, what kinds of rationalisations were made, what strategies were employed to deal with violence, and in what ways participants watched the violence they were confronted with, and so on. The result of this stage is a set of codes which reflect the mechanisms that are available to participants when faced with the task of attributing meanings to their encounters with real life violence.

Diagram 5.6: Real Life Violence Codes (Study 2)

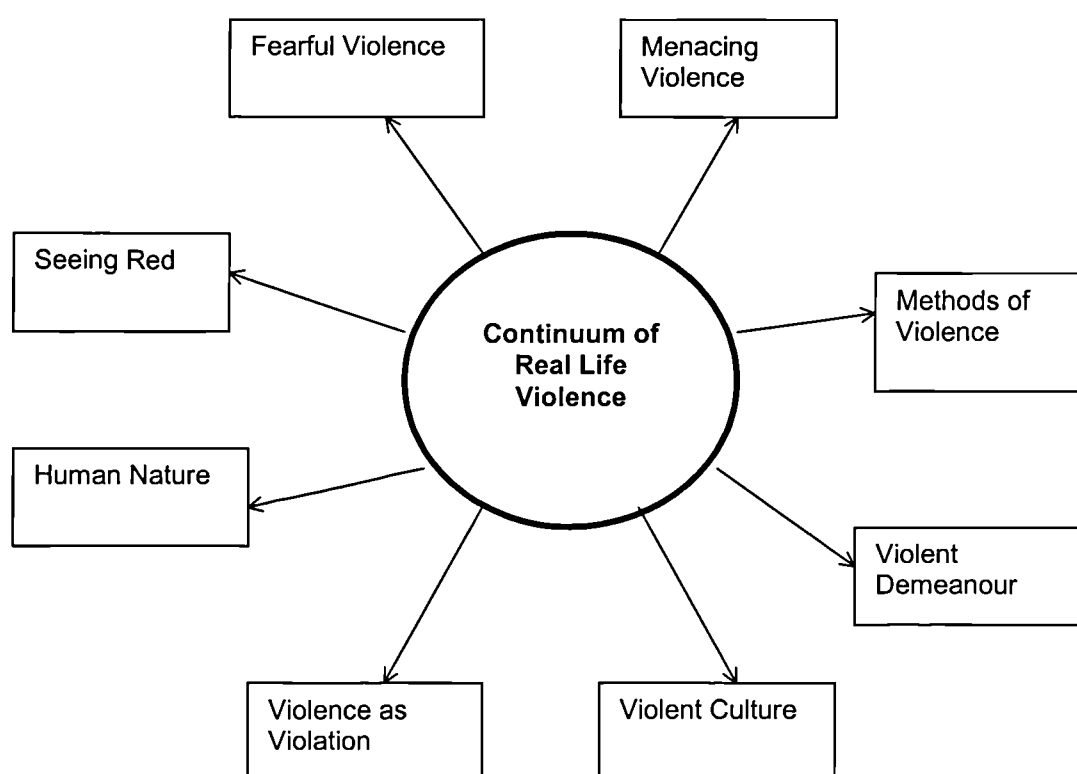


The sheer number of codes uncovered in the data of Study 2 indicates that encountering violence in real life is neither a simplistic nor an easily generalisable experience. Moreover, the findings of this study emphasise the uniqueness of experiencing violence. Two of the codes shown in Diagram 5.6 are divided further into sub codes, identified with an asterisk (*). Each of these codes will be illustrated in the following discussion of participants' experiential accounts.

(i) The Continuum of Real Life Violence

The continuum of real life violence contains several sub codes, shown in Diagram 5.7, which reflect the different ways in which participants define violence. The methods of violence sub code refers to violence as an event, seeing red and human nature include accounts of behaving violently, or feeling violence, while the remainder describe violence almost abstractly, as a concept which is encountered in different ways.

Diagram 5.7: Continuum of Real Life Violence Code and Sub Codes (Study 2)



The methods of violence sub code includes references to examples of behaviours which participants place under the umbrella of violence, for instance:

- P7: "well you don't understand violence when you're ten .. violence is thumping a guy on the nose when you were annoyed with him .. I've never liked it .. I've never liked it .. where I lived it was a bit rough and you either became a good fighter or a good runner and I became a good runner"
- P8: "somebody being attacked .. it wouldn't matter to me whether it was a man or a woman or a child .. somebody being attacked that's violence .. my mother-in-law who's eighty-five had her handbag stolen .. he didn't touch her he just ran off with her handbag .. yet the effects on her .. she doesn't go out now .. gradually she's stopped going out because she's very slow and she's looking over her shoulder .. that was a form of violence to her because it's made her stay in now"
- P11: "violence in real life when you're walking down the street is basically any human being be it male or female attacking or striking any other person that is violence and it's something I don't want to see on the street"
- P13: "ooh gosh it can take so many different forms .. physical violence .. from the drunken brawls I suppose to premeditated attacks going to gang warfare"

The extracts above reveal a range of violent events which participants do not like. The following sub codes of fearful violence and menacing violence support this dislike of violence. For instance fearful violence is described thus:

- P1: "the apprehension by one person .. the fear of a physical assault .. actions by one person that propose the prospect of giving fear to someone else .. whether or not it results in physical assault"
- P3: "in its purest form violence is subjecting an individual to an experience .. either physical or mental .. that makes them uncomfortable .. so it's not just aoiw you've cut my leg .. it's the mental torture .. it's the bullying .. it's being in fear of either having to live with a situation or being unnecessarily embarrassed .. it's all violence in a form"
- P10: "anything from someone shouting abuse to a fight I don't like fighting at all .. I can't stand it .. I hate fighting .. it scares me to death because one punch"

These examples stress the non-physical aspects of violence. P1 states that the anticipation of violence is worse than the actuality. It is this notion of violence which manifests itself in emotions rather than physical injuries. This is demonstrated further in the sub code of menacing violence:

P7: "the Germans they had a very clever psychological thing they put whistles on the bombs .. so you could hear one and you could swear it was going to land on you and when it exploded it was obvious it was miles away [. .] they were frightening .. you could go out and see a whole row of houses .. Victorian housing .. a bomb would land at one end and the whole row would go down"

P13: "there's - I think you can be violent without a fist fight even .. just with mental cruelty .. it's all a part of violence to me that .. anything that instils fear of somebody else is violent it doesn't have to be a physical attack"

These emotional qualities of violence are also reflected in the sub codes of violence as violation and violent demeanour. It is the feeling of being violated which constitutes violence according to participants referring to this code:

P5: "invading someone else's security I suppose on one level .. not actually doing anything .. talking to them .. I don't know if you could call that violence but the effect is exactly the same .. I suppose if you feel insecure inside then that's a kind of violence and then it goes up to physical contact and intimidation"

P6: "violence is violating of other peoples' space .. violating somebody's character .. person .. inflicting something on somebody else that they don't want"

Violent demeanour is the sub code which includes a number of aspects of modern day life which participants feel constitute violence, for instance:

P7: "I don't like violent music .. a lot of music is very violent in its content .. I don't mean the words I mean the way it's projected .. I think it's once again my age group .. a lot of people when they get older they can't do with a lot of noise .. violent activity .. not necessarily people being violent to one another but the way they're acting [. .] why have they got to be so aggressive .. things are aggressive .. the modern trend is to be aggressive .. look at this artist who had a sheep cut in half as part of his exhibition and this other guy who's recently got somebody to smuggle human remains out of a hospital and making moulds of them and casting them and calling it art .. that's a form of violence I think"

P7 perceives art and music as instances of violence as well as behaviour between individuals. Further, the sub code of violent culture identifies violence as both a societal and world wide phenomenon:

P12: "circumstances can be violent can't they .. if you're born into a part of the world where you're deprived of food .. clothing and shelter .. water .. there's a kind of violence against you there .. the elements can be violent .. I mean we've just had these floods .. there's violence there in a way .. so the world itself can create violent situations [. .] I suppose you could then say nations commit violent actions against another nation [. .] war .. that's another .. what is war .. is that violent .. it creates violent episodes and violent scenes so the state can administer violence"

The final sub codes of the continuum of violence depict participants' descriptions of violence in terms of the act itself. Seeing red (P7 below) includes the feelings of anger and the welling up of emotion which simultaneously create violence, and human nature (P9) is the final sub code which illustrates that violence is simply and undeniably a condition of humankind:

P7: "my son said to me - my son's nearly thirty now .. he said to me you're always losing your temper I said you've never seen me lose my temper .. I have he says .. I said you've seen my annoyed you haven't seen me lose my temper though because if you did you'd never forget it because I don't know what I'm doing when I lose my temper that's why I daren't lose my temper .. you know the expression seeing red .. well I do see red .. everything .. it's like looking through red tinted spectacles .. I suppose it's the blood rushing to me .. when I feel the beginning of that in the pit of my stomach I walk away .. I've got to walk away from it because I don't know where it's going to finish .. so I suppose all of us have violence in us .. if we're pushed far enough"

P9: "violence is an emotion [. .] and I think everybody has some in them when they lose their temper and they shout but they don't get that far to being violent [. .] it's either an emotion or its second nature [. .] it's a frenzy isn't it and it's all worked up sometimes and somebody gets hurt think it's a bit of bravado but I don't know that's all I can define it as because I don't know"

P7 above defines violence through his personal experience, whereas for P9 this is a more difficult task due to her lack of knowledge. This notion of violence provoking a kind of misunderstanding is continued in the codes of meaningless violence and unjustified violence.

(ii) Meaningless Violence

Meaningless violence is the label given to violence which participants consider to be pointless and senseless, for instance:

- P1: "I've been assaulted and have assaulted and thought then that it was mindless and avoidable [. . .] I can't understand why these people fight or want to fight .. I've never understood it but they seem to get some sort of buzz out of it .. it's something to do with men being men wanting aggressive contact .. the justification they come up with is usually something like he looked at me .. or he knows he shouldn't be down this street .. where's the logic in that"
- P7: "the guy next to me turned on me because I was drinking orange juice"
- P11: "the whole violence thing I think it's completely unnecessary it's horrible [. . .] I've had it myself three lads trying to jump the queue and you're like excuse me I've been stood here for half an hour and one of them took his jacket off and went like this [tenses his arm muscles] to show me his muscles look at me I'm like I don't give a monkeys you know I'm here for a taxi but he's so proud to show me his muscles and I'll strike you and all this"

These extracts reveal the difficulties participants face when they attempt to attribute meanings to real life violence. The next code of unjustified violence further exemplifies the problematic nature of this process.

(iii) Unjustified Violence

This code illustrates how participants sometimes can find no reasoning behind the violence they have experienced:

- P2: "I got head butted by somebody .. twice actually .. for no apparent reason .. it was in a night club .. I was enjoying myself talking to my friends and this guy came over and head butted me out of the blue [. . .] initially I thought I don't know him so why is he doing this to me .. how could I have upset him what's his problem"
- P5: "after he'd punched him fair enough they'd had a dispute they'd thought about it whether it was right or wrong but there was no need to go to the extent that he did .. he was punching for about five minutes [. . .] it's just a waste of their life"

However, in some cases reasons are found which participants use as mechanisms to justify violence. The first code which reflects this rationalisation of violence is the code of perpetrator's justification.

(iv) Perpetrator's Justification

This code includes the discourse from participants who have first hand experience of committing violence together with that which offers justifications on behalf of perpetrators whose violence has been witnessed by participants:

- P3: "the youths felt it was acceptable to carry knives and inflict violence willy nilly they were suffering no moral compunction that they were administering violence to me and I thought it was a breakdown in their parental control and the society that they live in and films can be partly to blame because you're seeing it all the time .. there is a direct relationship between the way I suffered and the fact that they felt it was acceptable to do it"
- P6: "I just had the urge to slap him or kick him and he obviously felt the same way .. there wasn't anything that led up to it .. sometimes I said something he didn't agree with or he said something I didn't agree with"
- P7: "I was in the Middle East in the Suez Canal zone at a time when the Egyptians wanted the British out [. . .] prior to that I was stationed at a place called Ismâ'iliya .. they had an outbreak .. it was a bit like Northern Ireland there was always guerrilla war .. sniping [. . .] I was on night duty and we got sent down to clear the street because there was open warfare .. me and my mate and another chap .. he got killed - my mate got shot and I shot the bloke that shot him .. it's a long time ago now [. . .] I can remember now ..he sort of told me to eff off and had a go and ran off down the street and instead of weaving he ran in a straight line and he copped it .. he was a big mate of mine .. he slept in the next bed to me .. me and Billy were great together .. I just got madder - well at first I just got very very upset [. . .] I shot my way to a shop doorway and dived under the truck and it was all burnt out and I could see this mate of mine in the road face down .. and there was flies all over him [breaks into tears] [. . .] he'd fired a couple of times at me .. perhaps he thought he'd hit me .. and I looked up between the wheels and he was sat on a balcony that sort of overhung the pavement .. I couldn't see him clearly I could just see a head [. . .] so I got up on my back side and I lined up the gun on him and I started thinking .. this isn't going to bring Billy back .. and all of a sudden he looked down the street and he pointed and laughed and I shot him .. and it blew him right off the balcony "

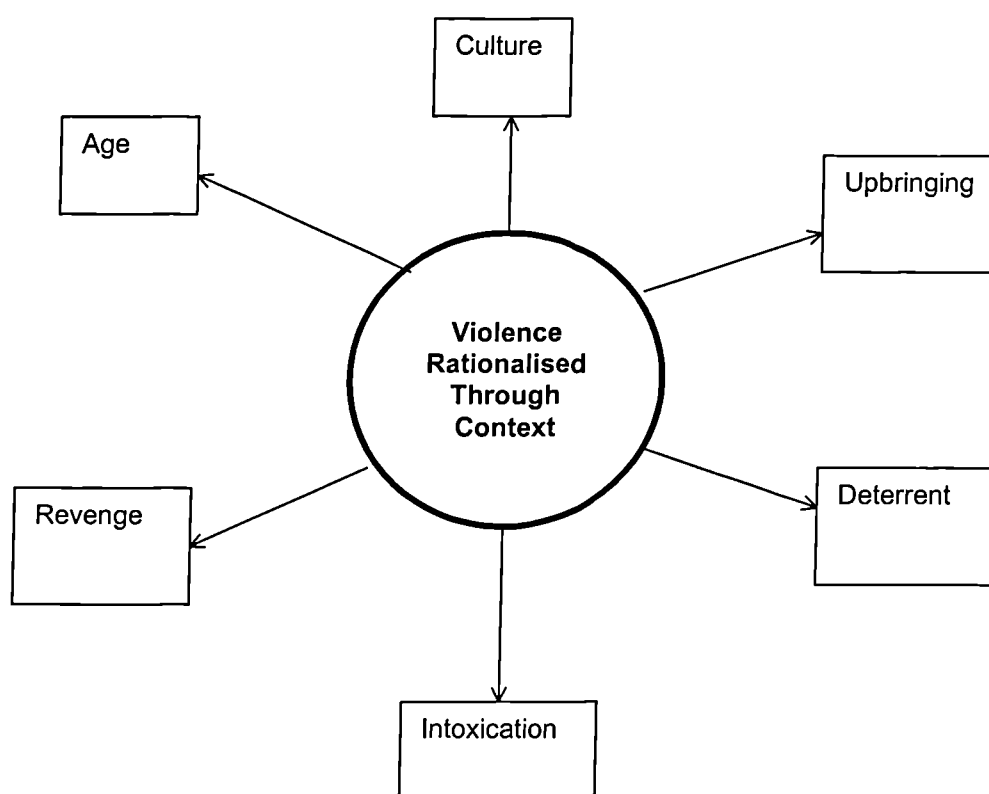
This last example from P7's account is of a severe nature which happened in the context of a war régime, nevertheless it was because his dear friend Billy had been shot by a man who then laughed at him which led P7 to shoot and murder the sniper. The upset and anger which P7 felt when he witnessed this violence against his friend, although of the extreme kind, are feelings which are shared to an extent by other

participants. It is not only the violent actors themselves who find ways of justifying violence, however, the victims and witnesses of violence are also capable of attaching reason to violent events.

(v) Violence Rationalised Through Context

The code of violence rationalised through context reveals that a number of factors, including avenging loved ones for example, can legitimate violence. Diagram 5.8 depicts the sub codes which represent the different contextual factors through which participants rationalise instances of real life violence.

Diagram 5.8 : Violence Rationalised Through Context Code and Sub Codes (Study 2)



One example of violence being justified through conceiving it as revenge is taken from P6's account. Once she had left the violent relationship which she discusses in the interview, she describes how her father wanted to take revenge:

- P6: "my Dad wanted to go down and kick his head in because he's hurt his daughter - to everybody else that wouldn't be justified that would be stooping to his level but to him it would be justified .. if somebody is hurting your own then that would be justified to that particular individual"

The other devices which participants employ in their justification of violence include intoxication, due to drugs and alcohol for instance, and the perpetrators' upbringing. For instance, P9 describes her abusive stepfather as drunk, P10 refers to the people who robbed her Off Licence as being on drugs, and P13 expressed concern for the pupil who attacked her at school due to her loveless home life:

- P9: "he used to drink a lot and come home and if she said a word to him he used to give her a slap"
- P10: "they were smacked up or whatever we found out later because we found a needle in the shop - a syringe so they'd probably just shot up and done it"
- P13: "I knew she had a rotten home .. I knew she had a drug using mother I knew they used to thief .. I felt sorry for her really but she'd been so deprived of any kind of affection and you trying to teach the values that weren't being taught at home .. I had to try and get that through to somebody who has no conception of them and no idea about co-operation because it's grab grab grab or fend for yourself otherwise you don't survive"

Some participants refer to a violent culture in their rationalisation of events they describe as violent. P4 witnessed a group attacking a pick pocket on a bus when she lived in Tanzania, P11 talks of football violence, and P13 describes recurring fights between ethnic groups. These examples reveal how violence cannot be understood unless the witness is a member of the culture or sub culture in which it occurs:

- P4: "rather than the police being called a mob thing took over .. that was the culture there so it wasn't as surprising that it happened [. .] it sounds crazy telling it but in the context of life there it was normal"
- P11: "I picked the most unfortunate time ever to walk out of that station trying to get Newcastle United into the station and the four thirty train was trying to get out of the station and there was a full scale riot going on in the car park"
- P13: "I think of how they've been victimised by their peers their white peers at school in the past and they're fighting back they're giving what they've received and although you can't condone it you can understand it to a certain extent"

In this sense it is the context of the culture or sub culture in which the violence occurs that participants use to rationalise violence. In short, a number of the perpetrators' attributes are used by victims of violence in order to make sense of them.

(vi) Fear of the Unknown

Linked into whether or not participants can find meaning in the violence they have encountered in real life is the code of fear of the unknown. This fear manifests itself when participants are confronted with a violent situation over which they have no control, for example P6 describes the time when her partner attempted to strangle her:

P6: "we were quite angry and he held me down by the neck and I was strangling I could feel my neck - I was choking and that to me - when you think you're going to die and you don't know what's going to happen [. . .] it was the most distressing thing I've ever been through that relates to violence .. that wasn't the only thing that happened but when you don't know what's going to happen next when you're out of control that's the worst thing that has ever happened to me"

P1's experience is distinct from that, as he tells of an incident which occurred whilst he was on duty as a police officer, nevertheless, this same fear is present. P1 and his colleagues were called out to a man who had locked himself in the bathroom with a kitchen knife. Whilst P6 was alone with her violent partner, P1 was in the company of his fellow officers, moreover, he had been trained to deal with such situations, yet to a lesser degree the same sentiment is expressed:

P1: "I believed someone was going to get stabbed - not killed I thought we would overpower him before that would happen"

(vii) Trauma

The severity of such experiences is further represented by the code of trauma. Again P1 refers to his vast experience as a police officer, and P6 to her violent relationship:

P1: "road traffic accidents are much worse because they involve glass .. crushing being carried along the ground etceteras .. this results in trauma all over the body rather than just on one area and often the clothes get ripped off .. when people get stabbed their clothes often hide the injury and seeing people with clothes on is normal .. it is more traumatic when they have been ripped off because you actually see the flesh"

P6: "I couldn't breathe and the only thing I could think about was I'll never see my Mum again .. my parents .. and my friends [. .] you just carried on like nothing had happened even if you couldn't walk for a week or you were bruised you just got on with it .. and still to this day I don't understand why I stayed with him for so long"

These extracts reveal the horrific and life threatening nature of violence in real life. It is not surprising, therefore, that participants are shocked when they are confronted with violence, as demonstrated in the code of shock.

(viii) Shock

Below P2 talks of the time he was threatened in a public house, P4 describes the repercussions of witnessing an attack of a pick pocket in Tanzania, and P10 was in shock after being robbed at work:

P2: "I couldn't deal with this .. it was unexpected it was so sudden .. why is he talking to me like that I've never seen him before what have I done to upset him .. you just never know when it's going to happen .. I was scared when that happened - it struck me through the next day"

P4: "the incident shook me up so much that a couple of months later I turned round and found someone's hand in my bag in a crowded market place .. your instinct would be to shout stop thief but I stopped myself because I had seen what would happen in that situation so I just looked at the man and he dropped the purse back in my bag and walked away [. .] it was so beyond my experience that it was very shocking I felt sick when it happened .. shaky sick .. shocked"

P10: "that was quite shocking I had to have two weeks off work and I ended up leaving work through it I didn't want to go back in the shop"

However, despite being in shock, some participants tend to down play the intensity of the violence they experienced.

(ix) Under-emphasis

This code illustrates the ways in which participants under-emphasise their encounters with violence. For instance, P1 discusses a number of violent incidents which he encountered as a police officer; he refers to fights as "bread and butter" (P1) and says of an attempted stabbing, "[it] wasn't too serious" (P1):

P1: "this situation wasn't too serious because the man was on one side of the door and me and my colleagues were on the other [. .] the man had a knife - the blade was this big [points to an A4 clipboard] no-one was actually injured but this bloke was really trying to stab me"

P1's experience is rather different from the other participants because dealing with violence is an essential part of his career, nevertheless, those participants who had no professional experience of violence in that sense also under-emphasised the severity of their encounters with violence:

P5: "when you're young like that you think oh it's just a part of growing up"

P10: "it sounds dead dramatic doesn't it [. .] I don't think about it everyday or anything like that .. a couple of weeks later .. I'd only been with my boyfriend about two months so it was like can you believe that happened to us"

P13: "I suppose people would look at that now and say that was a minor incident it wouldn't get in the papers"

As previous codes have shown participants were in shock when confronted by violence in real life to the extent that they were in a state of disbelief and were sickened by what they saw. However, many felt obliged to rationalise their responses to real life violence.

(x) Rationalisation of Response

The information offered by participants which constitutes this code may be considered redundant due to the simple fact that they had been seriously affected by violence, nevertheless, many participants reveal their uncertainty in the ways they dealt it:

P3: "my reaction wasn't to retaliate but to restrain .. I wanted the police to turn up and take them away [. .] it was pretty unpleasant .. my moral standing as manager meant I had to put myself on the line"

P9: " when he walked in the door I hit him with the chair Hazel hit him with something else and our Beryl had the knife and we held him against the wall and we were going to kill him [. .] that's what it did to us seeing first hand like that - we weren't having anybody we loved being treated like that through drink [. .] that's the only thing I've ever done like that but we were protecting somebody .. it wasn't just our - we were protecting my Mum and we planned it"

These feelings of insecurity when participants are forced to deal with violence are exemplified further in the code of powerlessness.

(xi) Powerlessness

Participants reveal notions of impotence in the face of violence:

- P4: "I tried to stand up and say something but the first language in Tanzania isn't English but there was nothing I could have done I was powerless in the situation"
- P6: "it was just one of those things you just accepted it [. .] I still don't understand why I stayed with him for so long"
- P9: "I felt stupid because I'd left the counter and should we have done it differently and Paul was saying I should have just hit him you know"
- P13: "I was really frightened really frightened there was no way you could escape because the tube was so crowded [. .] I was just terrified and wanted to distance myself but I just couldn't I just couldn't get away"

This code epitomises participants' experiencing of violence; the feeling of impotence in response to violence is a notion supported by many of the codes revealed in this study. For example, this challenging nature of violence is manifest in the codes of meaningless violence, disbelief and unjustified violence which also highlight that participants are troubled by their inability to make sense of violent events. Conversely, the codes of perpetrators' justification and violence rationalised through context show that at the same time participants endeavour to make meaning in violence through explaining its occurrence in different ways. Throughout all this confusion, however, there is a compulsion to watch.

(xii) Watching Violence

Several participants state frankly that they could not avoid watching violent events. In addition, the mere detail with which these events are described reveals that participants watched closely the happenings around them when confronted with violence:

- P4: "a man got on the bus as if he was a passenger but he wasn't he wanted to go through peoples' bags and it was found out what he was doing very quickly .. rather than the police being called a mob thing took over [. .] he was a couple of seats in front of me and he

fell to the floor and people kept kicking him and then all the people who had been involved just went back to their seats"

- P5: "this was such a brutal kicking .. he got up afterwards .. as he was such - messed up on drugs and you could see his face was almost caved in it was and blood dripping down him [. .] I've never seen nothing like that before .. it was right there .. I didn't know what to do .. I didn't look away or nothing .. I was watching it and I was thinking this is grim"
- P11: "it's horrible to see he must have hit her five times while me and my friend were sat there going what's going on here"
- P13: "you can't help yourself really because it was so close I suppose I was watching out for myself to make sure it didn't come too close to Andrew my nephew and myself"

This code suggests that there is some kind of magnetic pull which draws people to watch violence in real life. This act of watching violence in real life, however, is distinguished emphatically in participants' accounts from watching film violence.

(xiii) Real Life Versus Film

Participants stress the differences of real life violence and film violence through their personal experiences of both:

- P1: "there isn't much dramatic effect - stabbings are not always realistic [in films] there tends to be a lot of blood pouring out which doesn't happen that is more likely to be the result of a slash wound"
- P3: "the fact that I can cope with that on screen and not in society indicates that I can depict the two"
- P4: "my response to violence I have seen in real life has been totally different .. because you understand that it isn't on a screen this is happening now and there are people actually being hurt rather than this is actors filming - there is a very clear separation I could definitely see more in a film"
- P7: "they tend to think that real violence in real life is like the movies and that everybody will get up and wash the blood off and come off untouched"
- P9: "seeing it really face to face .. in the flesh it's different from watching a film"

This final code confirms the conclusions made in Study 1 that experiencing violence in real life is distinct from experiencing it receptively via film. This is also supported by the

majority of the discursive data analysed. The codes in this section of Study 2 reveal that real life violence can be devastating for those who encounter it and that it provokes a sense of meaninglessness and of powerlessness. However, participants do find mechanisms through which violence can be legitimated. Further, the continuum of real life violence demonstrates that participants are successful in attempts to define violence, albeit in a fashion which stresses the complexity of the phenomenon. In short, this analysis confirms that experiences of real life violence are unique, yet at the same time the accounts converge in the ways that participants respond to their experiences of violence and the manners in which they cope with them.

5.5 Summary of Findings

The findings of Study 2 have revealed a wide range of ways in which individuals attribute meanings to their experiences of violence. This diversity is made particularly explicit in the codes of continuum of film violence and continuum of real life violence. Within the continuum of film violence there is a set of nineteen sub codes which include positive definitions, such as fascinating violence, informative violence, black comedy, and fantasy, as well as negative conceptualisations, for instance, menacing violence, shocking violence, frightening violence, and violence as violation. Within the continuum of violence in real life the sub codes of menacing violence, frightening violence, and violence as violation are again used by participants to define violence. This illustrates a degree of similarity in the ways that film and real life violence are defined. However, the remainder of the sub codes in the continuum of real life violence reveal that real life violence is also perceived in terms of acting violently, for instance seeing red, and in terms of a violent culture. Moreover, definitions of real life violence are shown to be intrinsically linked to individuals' perceptions of human nature. These continuums of violence both confirm and expand upon the findings of Study 1 that violence cannot be defined by a single definition, thereby illustrating the confirmability of the studies. Rather, in answer to the research question asking how violence is defined, violence is conceived differently depending upon the context in which it is experienced. This finding has severe implications for psychological effects research which has assumed that violence is a homogenous concept (e.g. Belson, 1978; Schramm, Lyle and Parker, 1961; Bandura, Ross and Ross, 1963a, 1963b, 1961).

Similarly the meanings which participants attribute to their experiences of violence are inseparable from their context. This significance of context is also identified by Morrison

et al (1999), Schlesinger et al (1999), Hill (1997), and Gunter (1985) amongst others. Both film and real life violence are made meaningful through individuals' responses to it which are evoked by a number of contextual factors. For instance, the real life codes of frightening violence, shock, sickening, upsetting, and trauma reveal that witnessing a real life violent event is made meaningful through these emotions. Likewise, the meanings attributed to experiences of film violence are illustrated through the codes of humour, enjoyment, dislike, difficult to watch, disturbing and sickening. It is not only the visual display of violence, be it real or dramatised, therefore which is significant to participants' experiences but their meaningful responses to them. Hence, individuals do not respond simply to the violence per se but to the meanings imposed upon it. This finding provides an answer to the second research question posed in this study; individuals attribute meanings to their experiences of violence through their emotional responses to it and that these meanings vary depending upon the context in which it is experienced.

In addition, the findings of this study reveal that on occasions individuals refer to existing cultural ideologies in their meaning-making processes. The codes of reference to scientific and popular discourses illustrate that it is not only idiosyncrasies, such as emotional responses, which influence the meanings attached to experiences of film violence but external forces also play a part. The discourse analysis confirmed that there is a wide range of established ways in which film violence is conceptualised within contemporary culture and the interpretative phenomenological analysis revealed that participants are aware of these. For instance, the existence of violence within the visual media is explained in terms of the popular discourses of fascination with violence, audience demands, and glorification of violence. Further, many participants demonstrated their knowledge of scientific discourses, illustrated in the sub codes of the 'causal effects model, effects on children, fear of crime, and desensitisation to violence, for example. Therefore, when making sense of film violence individuals refer not only to their subjective experiences but also to the wider contexts of contemporary popular and scientific cultures. These findings expand upon the results of previous mass communications studies which have confirmed the diverse nature of individuals' perceptions of violence (Sander, 1997; Gunter, 1985).

The final research question in this study asked how individuals rationalise their experiences of violence. The film violence codes of violence rationalised through

narrative and violence rationalised through context again reveal that it is the context of the violence that is fundamental to individuals' experiencing of it. These findings reveal that disturbing and shocking scenes of violence can be rationalised if they appear to be legitimate within the story told by the film. Similarly, violence is accepted by participants if it is conceived to be justified by the context in which it is portrayed, for example if it fulfils the function of developing a character or if it is realistically portrayed. This contextual rationalisation is also evident in participants' accounts of real life violence. The real life violence code of violence rationalised through context reveals that violent events can be justified by the contextual features of those behaving violently. For instance, if the perpetrator is intoxicated or has lacked parental affection during their upbringing, their violent actions can be understood. Conversely, if these rationalisation mechanisms are not available, participants have no method by which violence can be made meaningful. This is illustrated in the code of unjustified violence, which evolved from the data referring to both film and real life violence.

In conclusion, *Study 2: Meanings of Violence* has established that attributing meanings to experiences of violence is not a straightforward process but that it is influenced by a number of contextual factors. Moreover, the interpretative phenomenological analysis has confirmed that the phenomenology of violence is dependent upon both the personal and the cultural components which make up lived experience. This is demonstrated through the idiosyncrasies of the experiences described, together with the shared ways in which they are understood, this is particularly evident in the codes of reference to popular and scientific discourses. Crucially, this study has revealed that violence can be rationalised through various mechanisms. These are to be investigated further in the next study in order to clarify the significance of rationalisations to the meaning-making process. Additionally, *Study 3: The Contextualisation of Film Violence*, will investigate the contexts of experiencing violence in more depth. Both the context of the film and that of the viewer, for example their gender, require further study. In short, Study 2 has confirmed that the context in which violence is experienced and whether or not it can be rationalised are fundamental to individuals' attempts to make sense of violence, however, they need to be explored further to enable a greater understanding of their role in the experiencing of violence vicariously.

Study 3: The Contextualisation of Film Violence

6.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the procedures and findings of *Study 3: The Contextualisation of Film Violence*, which is the final study in this project. Its function is to further investigate individuals' experiencing of film violence and to explore in more depth the conclusions of the previous two studies. Encounters with violence in real life have been sacrificed in Study 3 in order to focus upon the meaning-making processes involved in experiencing violence via the medium of popular film. The preceding analyses of the phenomenology of real life violence are sufficient to conclude that, while the experiences themselves are distinct from the experiencing of film violence, they provide an invaluable personal context to the ways in which individuals make sense of violence, through whatever channel it is experienced. In other words, individuals' experiences of violence, in real life and via film, cannot be isolated but converge, together with the personal and the cultural realms of meaning, to make up lived experience. It is in light of these findings that Study 3 proceeds with an in-depth inquiry into the experiencing of representations of violence in one instance of contemporary popular film. The particular interests of this study are context and the rationalisations of violence. Context will be investigated on two levels: the gender-specific context which is brought to the text is the first, and the second is the level of familiarity with the text, i.e. complete or partial contextual knowledge. The variable of context has been selected as the focus in this final study for two reasons. Firstly, the findings of the preceding studies have consistently revealed the significance of context in individuals' processes of making sense of violent film. Secondly, several previous studies have found that the meanings attributed to film violence vary according to the gender of viewers (Morrison et al, 1999; Schlesinger et al, 1999; Hill, 1997; Schlesinger et al, 1992). This study therefore aims to develop these findings by investigating in depth the responses of male and female viewers of violent film.

One key text is used as the focus in Study 3. In order for this text to elicit discourse about the nature of experiencing representations of violence regarding the issues of both gender and context, a number of criteria needed to be met. For instance, a suitable film would include scenes of violence in which both men and women are

perpetrators and victims. Likewise, for the comparison between complete and partial contextual knowledge to be possible it was necessary to locate a film which had been seen by some and which had escaped others. Additionally, an appropriate film would have been released relatively recently so that it would represent the cinema of the nineties. After considering a number of possibilities, *Natural Born Killers* (Director: Oliver Stone, 1994) was selected as the key text in Study 3.

Due to its significance to the design and findings of Study 3 it is necessary to provide some background information about *Natural Born Killers*. In Appendix 5.6 there is a brief analysis of the reviews and media attention which *Natural Born Killers* has received and in Appendix 5.5 a full scene-by-scene analysis of it. Below are some examples of these reviews and press articles which amply relate the nature of this film. The account given by Bouzereau (1996) in his text, *Ultra Violent Movies*, succinctly and adequately describes its story:

"Mickey (Woody Harrelson) and Mallory (Juliette Lewis) are a perfect couple in the sense that they share the same passion - and talent - for violence and murder. Mallory lives with an abusive, foul, incestuous, and repulsive father (Rodney Dangerfield) and an idiot mother; she is rescued by Mickey, who shows up one day carrying fifty pounds of dripping raw meat. Together they beat Daddy to death and set Mom ablaze. And that's just the beginning. As they continue their rampage, the public and the media eat it up. Sleazy TV journalist Wayne Gayle (Robert Downey Jr.) makes Mickey and Mallory cult heroes on his reality-based show *American Maniacs*. The couple is eventually arrested by a corrupt and homicidal cop named Jack Scagnetti (Tom Sizemore), who dreams of writing a book on Mickey and Mallory. In jail, the two are harassed by Scagnetti and by maniacal prison warden Dwight McClusky (Tommy Lee Jones), who wants to achieve media fame as the man who put them to death. Wayne Gayle sets about doing the television show of the century by interviewing Mickey and Mallory behind bars. But Mickey manages to grab a rifle and instigates a riot in the prison. After shooting Scagnetti and leaving McClusky to be butchered by his inmates, Mickey and Mallory escape with Wayne Gayle, who insists on going along. Free at last, Mickey and Mallory kill Wayne while his video camera is rolling on him and escape. The film concludes

with a quick montage of the John Wayne Bobbitt and Menendez brothers trials, O. J. Simpson, Tonya Harding, and with pulsing on the soundtrack for the end credits, Leonard Cohen's "Get ready for the future, it is murder".

(Bouzereau, 1996: 53-4)

The style of *Natural Born Killers*, Stone's intentions when making the film, and the controversy which surrounded its release are each represented in the analysis (in Appendix 5.6). For instance, the following article extract summarises the techniques employed to create a vivid portrayal of violence:

"[*Natural Born Killers*] plunders every visual trick of avant-garde and mainstream cinema - morphing, back projection, slow motion, animation and pixillation on five kinds of film stock - and, for two delirious hours, pushes them in your face like a Cagney grapefruit. The actors go hyper-hyper, the camera is ever on the bias, the garish colours converge and collide, and you're caught in this *Excedrin* vision of America in heat."

(Corliss, 1994: 2)

This reported excessiveness of the violence in *Natural Born Killers* and the portrayal of a murderous couple who escape justice have led to controversial decisions and allegations:

"The UK rental video release of the film was originally scheduled for 22 March 1996, but delayed out of respect for the victims of the Dunblane shooting tragedy. On 16 May 1996, Warner Bros Home Video announced that the release of the tape had been postponed 'indefinitely'."

(Barnes and Hearn, 1996: 175)

"The family of a Louisiana woman who say she was shot in a robbery inspired by Oliver Stone's film *Natural Born Killers* have been given permission to sue the director. The Supreme Court yesterday gave the go-ahead for the action by agreeing with a Louisiana Appeal Court ruling that the film was not protected by constitutional free-speech guarantees because it allegedly incited "imminent lawless activity". [. . .] It is alleged that Stone, Time Warner Inc. and others involved in directing, producing or

distributing the film should be held responsible and pay damages because they made a film that intended to make people violent. [. . .] The Supreme Court let the Louisiana ruling stand without comment."

(Whitworth, 1999: 14)

It is within this context of caution and blame that Stone defends his work. He describes *Natural Born Killers* as a satire on America's obsession with violence and the perpetuation of it by the media:

"When we set out to make *Natural Born Killers* in late 1992, it was surreal. By the time it was finished in 1994, it had become real. In that warped season, we saw Bobbitt, Menendez, King, Buttafuoco, and several other pseudo-celebrities grasp our national attention span with stories of violence, revenge, and self-obsession. Each week, America was deluged by the media with a new soap opera, ensuring ratings, money, and above all, continuity of hysteria."

(Stone, cited in Bouzereau, 1996: 56)

In short, *Natural Born Killers* is a vivid example of violent film which is greatly controversial, yet which is enjoyed by many. Moreover, in Mickey and Mallory there is both male and female violence which is portrayed with extreme intensity by Stone. *Natural Born Killers*, therefore, makes an excellent focus for a study which intends to reveal the roles played by gender and context in individuals' experiencing of film violence. Additionally, the controversy with which this film is associated equates the current controversy surrounding the presence of violence in the visual media.

The remainder of the chapter is divided into four sections including the study's *Research Questions*, its *Design*, the *Analysis*, and a *Summary of the Findings*.

6.2 Research Questions

Through its use of *Natural Born Killers* as a key text this study aims to gain a more focused understanding of the mechanisms at work in making sense of film violence. The findings of the previous two studies are fundamental to the goals which have been set in Study 3. For instance, they both found that the meanings individuals attach to violence are dependent upon a number of contextual factors. The effects of context will

be explored further in this study by comparing the responses of those who have watched *Natural Born Killers* in its entirety to those who have not. Lacking from the previous studies, however, is a close investigation into the contextual nature of the participants themselves. One of the ways in which this becomes possible is through identifying the differences which transpire due to gender. It is therefore the objective of Study 3 to compare the experiential discourses of men and women in response to film violence. Additionally, the findings of Studies 1 and 2 suggest that the personal and cultural contexts in which violence occurs are intrinsic to participants' rationalisations of it. Hence, this study aims to reveal the elements of film violence which make the justification of it possible.

The research questions posed in Study 3 are:

- ♦ What is the role of context in the process of making sense of film violence?
- ♦ What is the role of gender in the process of making sense of film violence?
- ♦ What contextual factors are at work in the rationalisations of film violence?

6.3 Design

Method

Inquiry groups, initiated by a screening of three clips from *Natural Born Killers*, are the method of data collection in Study 3. Inquiry groups were considered appropriate due to the nature of the questions asked. Essential in this study is the investigation of the different qualities of participants, i.e. male and female, those who have acquired contextual knowledge of *Natural Born Killers* through having watched it prior to the study, and those who do not have access to this context. Grouping participants with people in the same position as themselves, regarding gender and contextual familiarity with the film, will stimulate a discussion specific to that group which in turn will facilitate a comparison of the differences between the groups.

There are limitations in adopting a group approach to collecting data, however. For instance, one or two participants may dominate the discussion and less confident colleagues may feel unable to interject to add their opinion, there may be conflict within the group, or individuals might not wish to divulge personal information in a group context. Nevertheless, it is the job of the researcher, who acts as facilitator, to restrict the occurrence of such eventualities. A successful inquiry group can be achieved by ensuring that the topic of discussion is not of an over sensitive nature, through keeping

the topic, in this case *Natural Born Killers*, in the forefront of participants' minds, and through actively listening to what is being said in order that the discussion be redirected if necessary.

Inquiry groups are appropriate in Study 3, therefore, because firstly they provide a means by which participants can be separated by gender and context, and secondly the format of the study which involves first watching clips from a film and then discussing them, lends itself well to a group situation. Additionally, the group scenario enables individuals to share ideas and develop them with people similar to themselves while an individual may feel uncomfortable doing this alone. Four types of inquiry group were required in Study 3 to successfully answer the research questions: (1) male participants who have not watched *Natural Born Killers*; (2) female participants who have not watched *Natural Born Killers*; (3) male participants who have watched *Natural Born Killers*; and (4) female participants who have watched *Natural Born Killers*.

Materials

A schedule of topics to be discussed was used in the inquiry groups in order to both stimulate the discussion and to structure it in a manner which complies with the research questions (the schedule is in Appendix 5.7). The schedule is not a rigid requirement but a flexible guide to assist the researcher in conducting the inquiry groups. Each inquiry group focuses upon three clips taken from *Natural Born Killers*, therefore a copy of these clips, a television and video player were used. The clips shown to participants are: *Scene 1: The Diner*, *Scene 6: Mickey and Mallory murder her parents*, and *Scene 13: Mallory drives to the petrol station* (these clips are included in a scene analysis of *Natural Born Killers* which is in Appendix 5.5). These scenes were considered appropriate because they represent the nature and level of violence included in the film as a whole. Also these scenes, with the exception of *Scene 13: Mallory drives to the petrol station*, portray both Mickey and Mallory (Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis) committing acts of violence. Scene 13 focuses upon Mallory's murder of a petrol attendant which was selected because it shows a woman's violence. The discussions which took place in each inquiry group were recorded using an audio-recorder and cassettes.

Participants

Forty-six people responded to a campaign which was set up at a Student Hall of Residence, thirty-three of whom took part in an inquiry group (details of the inquiry group participants can be found in Appendix 5.3). The number of participants enabled the researcher to conduct each of the four types of inquiry group twice, meaning that there are two of type (1), (2), (3) and (4).

A Student Hall of Residence was used to solicit participants because late teens to early twenties is the target age bracket for films like *Natural Born Killers*. In fact, the British Board of Film Classification awarded an "eighteen" certificate to *Natural Born Killers* so those taking part must be eighteen years old or more. Additionally, inviting students to participate limits the age differences amongst participants. This is beneficial because it reduces possible differences due to age which in turn facilitates the focus on the implications of gender (i.e. male or female) and of context (i.e. having seen or not having seen *Natural Born Killers*) in the experiencing of film violence. Throughout the study participants are referred to as P1, P2, etc., however, they have been selected from a different sample from the preceding two studies. The inquiry groups conducted are referred to as MW1 and MW2 (males without context), FW1 and FW2 (females without context), MC1 and MC2 (males with context), and FC1 and FC2 (females with context). Table 6.1 shows which participants were involved in each of the inquiry groups.

Table 6.1: Inquiry Groups and their Participants (Study 3)

Without Context				With Context			
Male		Female		Male		Female	
MW1	MW2	FW1	FW2	MC1	MC2	FC1	FC2
P5 P8 P23 P27	P4 P6 P12 P20	P11 P14 P17 P18 P19	P7 P24 P25 P32	P3 P28 P33 P34	P38 P39 P40 P41	P35 P36 P37 P46	P42 P43 P44 P45

Procedure

The researcher gained consent from the warden and manager of the Student Hall of Residence to advertise the study using both posters (a copy is in Appendix 5.1) and a door-to-door campaign. Those who volunteered completed a questionnaire (in

Appendix 5.2). The questionnaire inquired about film viewing practices and preferences, whether or not participants had watched *Natural Born Killers*, and it invited them to take part in an inquiry group. Every effort was made to include all those who accepted this invitation, however, due to the need in this study to arrange research scenarios which comply exclusively with each of the four types of inquiry group (i.e. (1) males who have not watched *Natural Born Killers*; and (2) females who have not; (3) males who have watched *Natural Born Killers*; and (4) females who have) that was not always possible.

Once the eligibility of participants for each inquiry group had been established an appropriate time was negotiated between the researcher and each participant. On arrival at the location each participant was offered refreshment and briefed about what the inquiry group would entail. Participants were informed that the inquiry group would be audio-recorded, that they would be referred to as a number and therefore would remain anonymous, that they would be shown three clips from *Natural Born Killers*, and that the researcher would then ask questions in order to initiate a discussion. Once informed consent was given the inquiry group commenced.

Firstly, the group was told that the three clips would be shown in succession and in the order in which they appear in the film. Once the scenes had been shown the researcher began recording and initiated the discussion with the first topic on the schedule (the schedule is in Appendix 5.7). Throughout the inquiry groups the researcher took on the role of facilitator, i.e. rather than simply asking questions as an interviewer would, the researcher facilitated the discussion. This was achieved by initiating each stage of the discussion with open-ended questions, by prompting participants when there were pauses in conversation, and by interjecting where necessary. Once each of the topics on the schedule had been covered sufficiently the facilitator asked participants if there was anything more they would like to add. On some occasions this would induce further discussion, while on others it indicated the discussion's end. When each participant, including the facilitator, was content the inquiry group was closed and recording stopped. The participants were then reminded that they would be referred to by number rather than name and that the discussion would be transcribed (according to guidelines in Appendix 1.1) in order to provide a copy to be analysed.

6.4 Analysis

The same analytic tool is applied in this final study as those preceding it, interpretative phenomenological analysis. However, because of the large amount of data and the fact that Study 3 focuses on the experiences of one film (as opposed to a film compared with real life) this analysis is organised differently to those in the previous studies. Hence, four sections synonymous with the stages of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999; Smith, Osborne, Jarman and de Lacey, 1999), as outlined in Chapter 3, follow. These are Initial Reading and Note Making, Identifying Themes, Organising Themes, and Coding. The codes revealed in the corpus will be examined in sequence and the responses of the four groups of participants, i.e. males without context (MW1 and MW2), females without context (FW1 and FW2), males with context (MC1 and MC2), and females with context (FC1 and FC2), will be included within each code. Due to the large amount of data within each code these are divided into a further series of sub-sections under the titles given to the codes. At the end of the analysis section is a summary of what the codes mean in terms of the research questions.

Initial Reading and Note Making

The initial readings of the transcripts revealed a wide range of topics discussed by participants in relation to their experiences of *Natural Born Killers*. Differences according to contextual knowledge of the film were evident in these early stages; the accounts of men and women who had watched *Natural Born Killers* previously included comparable material as opposed to those of men and women who lacked this context. At this introductory phase of the analysis these differences were more apparent than those between male and female participants. Nevertheless, in order to facilitate the investigation of both gender and context the second stage of the interpretative phenomenological analysis, identifying themes, was conducted on each of the four groups of participant (i.e. males without context, females without context, males with context, and females with context) in sequence. This does not mean, however, that cross reference between the four groups did not occur as several of the identified themes are present throughout the whole corpus.

Identifying Themes

Due to the expansive nature of the data gained in Study 3 numerous themes were identified. A theme, according to the outline of interpretative phenomenological analysis

in Chapter 3, is a collection of participants' speech which expresses similar ideas, beliefs or interpretations of the topic under discussion.

There are a number of themes which are present across the corpus, such as those which include participants' discourse about the narrative of the film, the characters of Mickey and Mallory, the justification of violence within the film, the film's message, and participants' impressions of *Natural Born Killers*. Although these themes occur in all four groups, this does not mean that their content is the same. For instance, males and females with context were able to discuss the narrative with detailed information of how it develops throughout the film, while the groups without context drew their own conclusions about aspects of the clips shown which prior knowledge of the film would have proved false. Likewise differences were evident between the male and female groups in their evaluations of the characters of Mickey and Mallory. Not surprisingly the female participants displayed more affiliation with Mallory than with Mickey who was often described in a negative light, the male groups on the other hand were more inclined to criticise Mallory thereby suggesting a closer identification with Mickey.

Some themes were unique to those without context, such as the filming style and the genre to which the film belongs. These discussions are often a speculative attempt to make sense of the clips in the absence of the context in which they are portrayed. Similarly the transcripts of those without context contain the theme of watching film which collates the occasions when participants compare their disjointed experience of *Natural Born Killers* to their previous film viewing experiences. A theme unique to the groups with context is participants' reference to their previous viewing of *Natural Born Killers*, however, many of the themes in the groups with context covered a wider range of positions due to the added knowledge gained through watching the entire film. Under each of the theme titles is a collection of transcript extracts which represent that theme.

Organising Themes

The next stage of the interpretative phenomenological analysis is to organise the themes identified into thematic groupings. This involves rereading each of the themes in order to become as familiar as possible with what participants have said and it enables a comparison between the themes. In this case, the themes fell naturally into five groupings. This is not a predetermined amount, another researcher may interpret the data differently. However, the number and nature of thematic groupings are

significant in that they provide a degree of organisation to the expansive data gained in this type of inquiry.

The thematic groupings in this study, as shown in Table 6.2, represent five aspects of participants' experience of *Natural Born Killers*. The first group, narrative, includes the themes which deal with the story, the characters, the context, and the general assessment of the clips; the second, response, comprises participants' reactions to the clips and their attempts to find meaning in the representations of violence; the style of the film and the message participants believe it attempts to convey make up the third thematic grouping, message; the fourth, media violence, contains more general discussions about the issues of media violence; and the final group, evaluation, includes participants' appraisals of the film.

Table 6.2: Thematic Groupings (Study 3)

Thematic Groupings				
Narrative	Response	Message	Media Violence	Evaluation
Context	Ecstasy of Violence	Morality	Comparison to Other Films	Different Readings of the <i>Film</i>
Detachment		<i>Parody</i>		
Justification of Violence	Fascination with Violence	Testing the Audience	Comparison to Real Life	Expectations
Killer Instinct	Meaning in Violence	The Film's Message	Cultural Differences	Filming Style
Love/Sex	Shock Impact		Effects Model	Genre
Mickey and Mallory	Violence	Unusual Film Formula	The Media	Information-Packed
Narrative	Violent World		Television/Film Knowledge	Impression of the Film
Unjustified Violence			Violent Film Sells	Previous Viewing
			Watching Film	Tragedy

The thematic groupings become the basis for the final stage of the interpretative phenomenological analysis and because of this are essential. Due to the copious amount of discursive data obtained in this study and the large number of themes, these organised groupings provide an invaluable intermediary phase between identifying themes and eliciting codes.

Coding

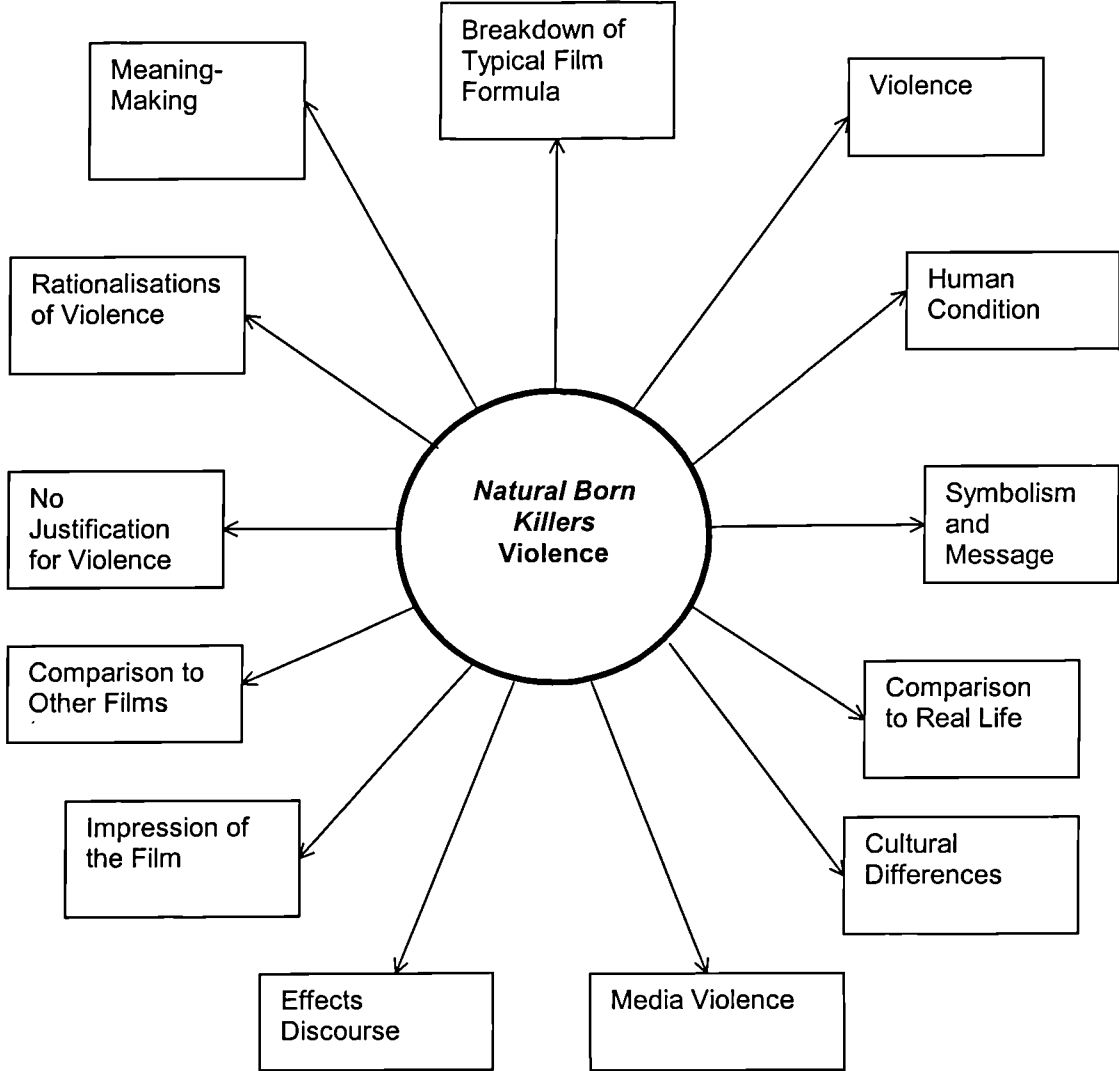
The fourth stage of the analysis involves establishing the nature of codes adopted in participants' experiential accounts of *Natural Born Killers*. Although some of these codes may reveal similarities to the findings of the previous two studies, it is crucial to note that these codes are evolved solely from the inquiry group data of this study. This means that any overlap between studies acts as corroborating evidence and strengthens the results. Coding is achieved through returning to the thematic groupings with an interpretative eye (Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999). The analytic goal therefore changes from simply collecting extracts which represent similar themes to making sense of the meanings within the discourse. The analyst is required to re-examine the thematic groupings with two objectives in mind: to reveal what it is that participants are saying about their experiences of *Natural Born Killers* and, moreover, to discover answers to the research questions posed. Answering these questions involves establishing the roles played by both gender and context in participants' meaning-making process of their experience of *Natural Born Killers* and determining what mechanisms are used in the rationalisation of the violence portrayed. This being the case, the aim of the analysis is no longer underlining the details of the discourse acquired, but is interpreting what it means in terms of gender and context.

The result of the coding stage is a series of codes which characterise the range of ways in which individuals, male and female, with context and without context, experience representations of violence in the film, *Natural Born Killers*. The codes established in Study 3 are shown in Diagram 6.1.

The thematic groupings which evolved in the previous stage of the interpretative phenomenological analysis are the basis on which these codes are established. Some of the themes within the groups are sufficiently substantial, both in content and significance to the research questions, to become codes in their own right. This is the case with the codes of violence, media violence, comparison to other films, comparison to real life, and cultural differences. Other codes are evolved from a number of themes within and across the groupings. The process of creating the thematic groupings throws up issues in participants' accounts which were previously hidden. For instance, within the thematic groupings of response, message and media violence, a number of transcript extracts highlight the belief among participants that *Natural Born Killers* represents a departure from violent film experienced in the past, these were collected

to form the code of breakdown of typical film formula. Similarly, within the thematic groupings of narrative and response, participants' beliefs about human nature pervaded their discussions of Mickey and Mallory's violence. This discourse makes up the content of the human condition code. Throughout the thematic groupings participants' attempts to rationalise the representations of violence in *Natural Born Killers* is abundantly clear. Due to the apparent significance of the process of rationalising representations of violence in *Natural Born Killers*, two codes emerged, rationalisations of violence and no justification for violence.

Diagram 6.1: *Natural Born Killers* Violence Codes (Study 3)



The analytic codes in Diagram 6.1 therefore represent the shared and unshared aspects of experiencing violence via the key text, *Natural Born Killers*. Although participants' experiences are unique, the ways in which they are experienced and expressed are bound by culturally shared discourses and ideologies of film violence. This means that the codes identified would not vary greatly if the analysis was conducted by another researcher. As in the previous stages of identifying and organising themes, the number of codes revealed in the corpus is not predetermined, and another researcher may produce a different variation of them. Nevertheless, due to the situatedness of lived experience this range of codes is a realistic reflection of the ways in which film violence is experienced within contemporary Western culture. Diagram 6.1 therefore is an illustration of the codes elicited in this study from the experiential accounts of *Natural Born Killers*, but it also acts as an indication of the means available to young adults by which their experiences of film violence can be made meaningful.

The remainder of the analysis is broken down by code. Within each sub-section are illustrations of participants' discourse reflecting the codes which have emerged. Some of the transcript extracts used in this discussion of the codes include exchanges between participants. This is due to the group situation in which the data was collected. At the end of each extract the appropriate inquiry group is cited in brackets (e.g. MW1) to signify both where the extracts is from and that it is the end of that particular extract.

(i) Breakdown of Typical Film Formula

The code of the breakdown of typical film formula reveals that participants are aware of the usual devices adopted in the film industry to tell a violent story dramatically. This finding is supported in the studies of Morrison et al (1999), Barker and Brooks (1998) and Hill (1997). Each of these investigations stress the significance of audience's understanding of the film-making industry, together with individuals' previous experiences of particular films, in their responses to film violence. The questionnaire data (which is in Appendix 5.4) confirms this knowledge as several participants chose films including representations of violence as their favourite film, for instance, P3's choice is *The Godfather Trilogy*, one of P12's favourite films is *The Deer Hunter*, P27 selected *La Haine*, and P38 *Seven*. The participants demonstrate this knowledge through their description of *Natural Born Killers* as a departure from these conventions.

Males without context identify the special effects used to portray the violence as such a departure, for instance:

- P23: "violent scenes seem different with the slow motion and the music" (MW1)
- P12: "it was weird .. like the knife going through the air it was like a cool way to do it
- P20: the bullet as well
- P12: the bullet and the hand picking which one to get" (MW2)

The males with context also describe the techniques used to tell the story as distinctive from other violent films they have seen. Their greater knowledge of *Natural Born Killers* permits them to offer more in-depth examples however. P34 identifies the fragmented nature of the story and P3 describes how the representations of violence are used differently:

- P34: "this is more fragmented as well .. unless you watch out for those very detailed signs you know I was doing something else at the same time whilst watching it but it's like you mentioned [P3] about the newspaper clipping I didn't really notice it - it didn't come to mind but it's like - one scene then it's going to another scene it's not like I suppose *Bonnie and Clyde* where they go around robbing a load of banks .. the connection the fluency wasn't there so maybe people might have turned off - maybe will have turned off because it was jumping and starting" (MC1)
- P3: "generally also I mean when you get that level of violence it's a climax to a scene .. or a film even .. I mean you don't get it straight away right at the beginning before even the title of film's come up do you .. so it's like been building up to something and it's like that's the release whereas here it's straight away" (MC1)

Also males who have seen *Natural Born Killers* believe that it takes a radical deviation from the stereotypical hero-villain model adopted in film, for example:

- P33: "it's the only film I've seen where they escape from prison and take the camera man with them .. I've not seen that done before at all" (MC1)
- P3: "well in lots of films you see the goody shoot the baddy at the end of the film and nothing happens whereas when the baddy shoots anybody else that makes him the baddy .. but the - when the goody shoots him at the end .. and he's still the goody and presumably he gets away with it" (MC1)

P41: "despite the fact that they were the heroes of the film I did want them to get caught" (MC2)

The females in the sample, on the other hand, stress the character of Mallory as a breakdown of typical film formula. Both the female groups with and without context describe her as an atypical Hollywood woman because of her ability to fight, her use of violence and her initiation of a violent sexual act, facets usually associated with male characters:

P32: "the other weird thing is you know when she's beating that guy up it gives you a feeling of maybe you'd be able to beat some guy up if some guy's coming on to you like that .. because if //

P7: if you hit somebody like that they're hardly going to go flat on the floor

P32: the way she was doing it it was almost as if she's been trained .. because she was kicking with great accuracy to the right points

P24: although he hits her she ducks doesn't she" (FW2)

P36: "I think one of the interesting aspects of it is that when he's watching - when he does get protective and you think that he's going to be the violent one and he's going to go out and shoot .. it was interesting to see a woman actually initiating violence and she got punched as well he punched her and she just .. basically kicked the shit out of him

P35: in a film yes

P36: especially for Hollywood where women are - just have certain roles

P35: it was like breaking boundaries weren't it .. normally it's the man who initiates violence either with another man or on a woman" (FC1)

P36: "I think as well the woman thing's interesting because she's cruising in her car .. the way that you'd - a lot of men cruising in cars in that kind of area and she's the perpetrator of sex I thought when I saw the film and they'd taken that woman hostage I thought we were going to see that woman raped and I froze .. but it flashed to Mallory cruising in her car going to a petrol station fill her up barking out an order and then she's - she's obviously very much in control it's not a rape situation but it's violent sex .. but the woman is the perpetrator and that again is turning everything on it's head you don't see Woody rape that woman but you see her involved in a violent sex act" (FC1)

These extracts clearly demonstrate a split by gender in the ways that participants illustrate the variation within *Natural Born Killers*, nevertheless each of the four types of inquiry group stress aspects which are different. The next code of comparison to other

films also represents that participants' experiencing of *Natural Born Killers* is distinct from similarly violent films.

(ii) Comparison to Other Films

All participants in Study 3 believe that *Natural Born Killers* does not include the most violent scenes they have witnessed in film. The males give examples of scenes which they believe are more visually violent than *Natural Born Killers*:

- P5: "I've seen worse films than that
P23: *Saving Private Ryan* was worse than that
P5: in *Blade* the main scene is a real blood bath .. it's surreal" (MW1)
- P3: "yes I think that's true considering all the way through - there's probably been more violent set pieces but again as a climax to something whereas here you know the continuity is violence and their characters .. which kind of are violence in human form in a way
P33: as actual blood and guts - and showing people exploding I'd say no I think *Wild at Heart*'s got worse scenes in it .. where the bank's robbed and the guy gets his hand shot off and the dog runs away with it .. and then the guy runs out the back falls on his shotgun and his head explodes against a white wall .. but that's only a very small part of the whole film okay it hasn't got the blood and guts in it but yes it is violent I think it is very violent without showing that .. because it doesn't need to show that" (MC1)

The females' accounts reveal that they experience the violence of *Natural Born Killers* in a more psychological way than the violence of other films:

- P18: "it's like the violence is really not the - actual physical violence isn't really important in it it's like your mind .. whereas in *Pulp Fiction* that's .. you actually see the violence and the gore more so and it's playing up more the action of killing whereas that's more .. the motivation" (FW1)
- P42: "there's more violent ones .. there's definitely more violent films about than that it's just that's violent in kind of a disturbing way" (FC2)
- P44: "it's violent in a psychological way you don't see people .. guts being ripped out" (FC2)

Having said that, participants select several films which they believe are comparable to *Natural Born Killers*, including *Pulp Fiction* (MC1, MW2, FW1, FW2, FC1, FC2), *Reservoir Dogs* (MW1, FW1, MC2, FC1, FC2), *Silence of the Lambs* (FC1), *A*

Clockwork Orange (FW1), and *Full Metal Jacket* (FC2). Those with context further develop these comparisons yet they continue to focus upon the differences:

P3: "it sort of draws you into their world doesn't it .. the discussions about killing the police chief - the discussions are all round the table and you're in there with them discussing it whereas here .. the motivation isn't made as clear .. it's all in remarks like you didn't do anything it's not - you don't get into their world in the same way and you don't see the violence in *The Godfather* straight away .. until you've been sucked in a bit whereas here from the word go you get the violence straight away with no real understanding of why it's happening .. until later in the film" (MC1)

P37: "yes I think *Pulp Fiction* you can because again it's so extreme again with the overdose injecting her in the heart and that .. it's so extreme but you laugh at it I mean I remember watching that film at the pictures and I was killing myself laughing and I was thinking I shouldn't be laughing at this this is sick what happens and .. I can't remember laughing at *Natural Born Killers* because I thought it was more violent - it's a different sort of film totally it isn't as funny I don't think but also the fact I make connections with it to *Silence of the Lambs* as well because it's one of the films like .. it's been said you have to watch it time and time again to get the whole thing like those scenes you showed then .. I'd totally forgotten .. I hadn't even noticed the one in the café at the beginning" (FC1)

Not surprisingly those participants who have watched *Natural Born Killers* are able to give fuller accounts of the ways in which it is different and similar to other films. The extended discourse of the groups with context therefore confirms that this comparison varies according to gender: the males use as a frame of reference the visual aspects of film to judge *Natural Born Killers* while the females' evaluations of it are more concerned with the mental tasks involved in the act of watching. This distinction is also found in Schlesinger's studies (Schlesinger et al, 1999; Schlesinger et al 1992) and in Morrison et al's (1999) investigation.

A detailed analysis of experiences of *Natural Born Killers* requires a focused examination of those codes which specifically reflect the ways in which participants experience this film. The codes of violence, meaning-making, human condition, rationalisations of violence and no justification of violence will be discussed first therefore before moving on to the codes which deal with the wider picture.

(iii) Violence

The code of violence is a collection of all the instances when participants mention the representations of violence in *Natural Born Killers*. Recurrent throughout the corpus is an element of surprise concerning the low level of blood and gore in this film. Participants' expectations may have been prompted by the attention *Natural Born Killers* received in the press and the indefinite postponing of its release for video rental in the United Kingdom. Both suggest that *Natural Born Killers* contains controversially high levels of violence. This phenomenon of 'hype' surrounding a film before its release and the expectations this creates is also found to be affective in individuals' responses by Barker and Brooks (1998) in their evaluation of responses to *Judge Dredd* and by Hill (1997) in relation to *Reservoir Dogs*. All the inquiry groups, excluding females with context, reflect the view that *Natural Born Killers* is not as gory and therefore not as physically violent as they expected it would be:

P4: "there's no gore element to it .. you don't see like when he shoots her in the head you don't see her head falling apart do you" (MW2)

P19: "I expected it to be more gruesome more detail" (FW1)

P33: "I think the actual violence itself it's more how it's portrayed .. I mean there isn't much gore there's no - apart from the blood splattering up the wall you don't actually see like the back of the woman's head coming off when the bullet's gone through it you don't actually see the knife go into the guy's back .. so I think it's more how it gets you to think rather than actually showing you the blood and guts sort of thing

P3: where it's different from other films I suppose is that the gratuity is before they actually get killed or injured isn't it .. with the knife spinning slowly through the air and the bullet as opposed to all the blood and guts afterward" (MC1)

Each of the participant categories isolates some quality of the violence through which their experiencing of it is defined. For instance, the males without context emphasise the lack of shock felt in response to the violence of *Natural Born Killers*. They believe that if it had been shown to them in a different context it would have shocked them:

P4: "last one .. she just pulled a gun out and shot him

P12: yes that last one if it happened in real life then it'd be shocking but in this film no it's only a little part of it" (MW1)

P4: "when she's driving down the road in that scene there's someone getting shot isn't there .. but you don't like feel anything it's like oh someone's being shot brilliant .. it doesn't shock you at all it takes

the shock away you just accept it .. there's no shock value to it - I suppose there is meant to be shock value to it but you just don't get shocked by it there's too much violence on television" (MW1)

This is further illustrated in the following extracts which reveal the qualities which are present in the violence of *Natural Born Killers*, according to males without context:

P27: "it's different to other violence .. it's more than an insecure thing the violence is not aimed at anything specific it's just like .. life sucks" (MW1)

P6: "it made it seem like they - when the guy was coming on to her there was a close-up of the other guy's face a big ugly face and he was just laughing and sweating .. it made it seem like they were hitting back against something that was bad .. and making it look cool like the violent reaction" (MW2)

The remainder of the sample identify the psychological aspects of both the representations of violence themselves and watching them on screen as the defining characteristic of violence in *Natural Born Killers*. An example found in each of the three remaining participant categories is the ways in which the threat of violence and the characters' fear are portrayed on screen, for instance:

P11: "the difficult thing is every person they killed .. you actually saw the fear in their face before they died you didn't see them killed but you did see that .. it made it seem more like a real person rather than just a load of shooting" (FW1)

P41: "well probably because there was more violence in it it was mayhem erm .. and there was that bit at the end with the eeny meeny miny mo thing when she was cowering away which was I found quite disturbing and when the Dad died there always that kind of idea that well he deserved to because he was a bastard so erm .. I don't know if that's .. but there was that close up on his face I hadn't really thought of that but you kind of got the feeling like yes I'd kill him" (MC2)

P36: "the first scene the bits .. the threat of violence when she's - they've shot everyone and she's left and she says there's no escape that was the bit that turned my stomach the most .. the psychological fear that kind of - I didn't like that" (FC1)

The female groups talk more explicitly about this psychological aspect of the violence in *Natural Born Killers* than their male counterparts. This may be due to the fact that the facilitator in the inquiry groups was also female, although it may simply illustrate that

women are more willing to discuss such sensitive issues within their peer groups than are men. For example they stress the psychological implications of portraying unusual methods of killing:

P37: "but the second scene it was the drowning it was the bashing over the head .. it was the setting fire to the mother and it was so much in your face .. this is a different type of killing which isn't acceptable whereas shooting is just like you just see so much of it" (FC1)

P43: "you can see the faces as well more .. you've got more look at their faces like her father looks completely and utterly distraught about it despite the fact //

P44: he's actually dead

P43: that he's actually what he's done and why she's doing it

P44: it's a more violent way of dying .. they're most violently killed - killed the most //

P43: a more prolonged way of dying than just simply shooting them

P45: yes but the first one when they're - she's doing the eeny meeny miny mo //

P42: yes that's drawing it out and playing with her" (FC2)

Those who have seen it describe *Natural Born Killers* as an emotionally engaging experience. This is demonstrated by participants' accounts of concrete experiences of disturbance at the psychological violence portrayed. In contrast, those without context divulge little about their emotional responses to *Natural Born Killers*. This may be due to the fact that watching three isolated clips does not allow participants to become involved in the film to the point where intense reactions occur.

The codes discussed thus far reveal that *Natural Born Killers* is somewhat of a distinct experience in terms of participants' knowledge of violent film per se, regardless of whether or not they had seen *Natural Born Killers* before the inquiry group. Having established this, the next code of meaning-making can be explored in a way which reveals the differences due to the level of contextual information accessible to participants.

(iv) Meaning-Making

The code of meaning-making collates the discourse within the corpus which is concerned with making sense of *Natural Born Killers*. Not surprisingly therefore, the groups with context display a deeper understanding of the film as a whole, while those without context disclose continuous attempts to attribute meanings to what is

witnessed. Firstly the meanings attributed to the three clips by those who have watched the entire film will be explored before moving on to those who lacked such a context.

Both male and female participants who had watched *Natural Born Killers* before partaking in Study 3 identify violence as its principal motif. This is manifested through their perception of the omnipresence of violence within the film, for instance:

P38: "you always knew someone was going to die it was like .. especially with the title as well .. it wasn't sort of a storyline the deaths were the storyline sort of thing trying to explain who they were it would be difficult to go into their characters without showing them kill people .. because that's the basis of their characters .. and the links between that and having sex" (MC2)

P46: "they were still - they were getting married but what did they do they cut each other to mix the blood so that they were one .. well that's fine

P36: that made me smile .. when she's got that white scarf on her head it's beautiful - it's beautifully shot the bridge and the mountains and what he says .. to my god and in the witness of god and the mountains and the river and everything else and then that car goes past .. and she changes from this blond wig and the lovely - it was almost like medieval that rag thing that she was wearing and then that truck goes past they jeer and yell and she goes .. fuck you ass holes and you know [turns back with a sweet smile]" (FC1)

Participants' experiencing of the representations of violence as the dominant quality of *Natural Born Killers* is also reflected in the following examples. P46 describes her shock at the immediacy of the violence in the first clip (*Scene 1: The Diner*) because it broke her expectations of film narrative, further P3's understanding is that the narrative is sacrificed in order to convey a meaningful message about the nature of violence:

P46: "yes when it first came out when - I didn't know anything about it really at all I just thought this is strange .. there's no - there is like a story to it but you expect I suppose it's a normal assumption to do with a film .. and the way it started out as well you know sort of setting the scene and they're going somewhere and you don't actually know what's going to happen .. and suddenly it turns into a blood bath it's just - I don't know I didn't like it and then when I watched it on the telly it's different because it's not so like in your face and you watch the other bits around the characters" (FC1)

P3: "I think story was sacrificed in a way to make the point about the violence it was trying to make [. . .] I'm thinking of the storyline as being a platform to show that violence and make a point about the

violence .. so the violence being the main thing of the film that you come away with rather than a film that tries to tell a story" (MC1)

The localised meanings attached to *Natural Born Killers*, i.e. those concerning the story it tells and the characteristics of Mickey and Mallory, also emphasise the violence within the film. For instance, the passion of the love that Mickey and Mallory display toward each other is contrasted with the calm and dispassionate way in which they kill:

P41: "there was a strange contrast wasn't there in the way that they were so dispassionate about killing people and so passionate with each other .. er like they obviously have an affection for each other erm so they are - it wasn't as if they were .. sociopaths because they were caring for another person's feelings but it was really contrasted with the totally dispassionate way they killed everyone else .. it made you want to .. the human side was there" (MC2)

P43: "when they're shooting people they do seem quite - despite the fact that they're killing people and they're clearly nutters they're actually quite complacent about it and sort of like affectionate to each other so you don't actually think they could actually do it because they still remain really calm placid sort of thing" (FC2)

P46: "they just switched into different people and then the way they came back and she just went I love you Mickey all happy and jolly .. after what they did together" (FC2)

Similarly, the calmness of Mickey and Mallory influences participants to make assumptions about their characters. For example, they conclude that Mickey and Mallory are in control when committing violent acts:

P3: "they're a lot calmer as well when the violence erupted I mean .. she was standing there going your move your move and then right in the middle of it all he just stood up and took his jacket off very slowly I mean

P33: like we've done this before .. we've been here before

P3: almost like they've engineered it to that point" (MC1)

P46: "I suppose it also sets the scene for him being the controlling man .. telling her what she can wear and can't wear or whatever and then it's switched round because she was the one that was in control because she finished it and she sorted it out" (FC2)

These illustrations of the meanings participants attribute to the violence in *Natural Born Killers* is evidently assisted by the heightened level of contextual knowledge to which these groups have. However, having experienced the film in its entirety does not

automatically lead to a lucid understanding. The meaning-making process of this film is a difficult one due to the novel nature of its violence. For instance, P3 describes the lack of context in the first clip and the extract following it illustrates the attempts to make sense of Mickey and Mallory's violence:

- P3: "the thing I really remember is the bullet at the beginning because I mean .. you've got no understanding of why it's there and it really just looks .. with the opera music and the cartoon music and bullet spinning it's just like it's really gratuitous violence for violence's sake there's no - you don't understand why it's happening" (MC1)
- P34: "maybe they'd done it once and therefore you become addicted to it - you've got to do it again and again to get that kick maybe to try and get that ultimate kick
- P33: they basically value life so little that they can do that .. I think that perhaps also the reason they value life so little is because they don't perhaps have a particularly high esteem for themselves
- P34: but do they they value their lives
- P33: I think they perhaps don't until they're killing people and then they feel like they have some kind of esteem .. like they're getting off on it" (MC1)

The struggle to find meaning in *Natural Born Killers* is linked explicitly to the nature of violence it contains by both men and women who have seen the whole film. Participants are unsure whether it is possible to understand the violence in *Natural Born Killers* because they feel that some of it is without meaning:

- P41: "did you think there was a mixture as well between senseless violence and sort of yes kind of er provoked violence .. because at the start it was almost like building up these people are getting provoked by the sort of harassment of these sort of red neck characters and so they like snapped and you know killed one of them and so the fight started .. and that was a sort of almost provoked violence or at least it was provoked by a certain reaction and then it became so senseless by the end when everyone was getting killed after that" (MC2)
- P44: "it's more meaningful violence
- P43: yes .. and she seems to sort of .. not really think twice about it she does in the beginning but //
- P42: yes but that's violence even though she's got a reason to do it even though it's in her own house whereas the first one she didn't really have a reason to kill anyone
- P44: I'd still say the second one because the first one is the same as the third one it's cold blooded violence .. it's meaningless .. whereas the first one //
- P42: the second one

P44: it has a meaning therefore it's more intense" (FC2)

In short, those with contextual knowledge of *Natural Born Killers* demonstrate the difficulties of attributing meaning to this film. However, this group of participants has revealed that they do attribute meanings to *Natural Born Killers*, where possible, through the nature of the violence it contains. Those participants who have not watched the whole of *Natural Born Killers* demonstrate a similar struggle for meaning, although the nature of difficulties divulged by this group suggest that it is due simply to a lack of context, rather than the meaninglessness of the violence portrayed. For example, both the male and female participants without context are confused about aspects of the film's story and the relationship between Mickey and Mallory:

- P5: "strange .. I have no understanding if he's related to them he says hello Mum or is it a sadistic I'm going to be part of the family
P23: at the start she had short hair maybe she's younger" (MW1)
- P6: "are they brother and sister
P20: yes I can't work out
P12: because it seemed like they were .. because it was her Dad and his Mum I thought and they live in the same house" (MW2)
P32: "they're brother and sister aren't they" (FW2)

Participants' discomfort with not being able to attach meanings to the clips is illustrated in their efforts to make sense of them, in spite of the lack of contextual information. For example in the third clip Mallory is alone, whereas in the first two she is with Mickey, because of Mickey's absence they assume that either the couple have split up or that he is dead:

- P32: "I think maybe she left him at one point .. or something had happened to him because she was having flashbacks of him filling up her car jumping about over the car .. and then he approached so I think she for some reason thought it was him and started off like that
P7: I think he's dead by that point definitely" (FW2)

However, both the male and female groups without context do demonstrate an understanding of the plot, albeit simplistically. For instance:

- P8: "she's abused .. he saves her because he killed her parents .. they go on the run get off on killing people and in the end he gets caught or killed and she tries to rescue him" (MW1)

- P12: "I think she's been abused I mean it sounds like it .. when she was with that guy in the petrol station she was saying tell me I'm beautiful tell me this .. as though she's been raped or something as though she's got some kind of grievance against something" (MW2)
- P18: "there's something weird about her relationship with her Dad because when she was on that car with that bloke she was flicking to her Dad" (FW1)
- P32: "they're serial killers and just go round killing people .. but she's a bit mucked up in her head because of what her Dad did and she's bitter towards her Mum because she never stopped any of it from happening" (FW2)

Again, the lack of context does not inhibit these participants from developing meanings in the three clips. The males discuss the behaviour of Mickey and Mallory in terms of their violence while the females assess the affect Mallory's abuse has on her violence:

- P23: "her dancing was asking for trouble .. she wants a bit of fun before they kill people" (MW1)
- P4: "it's definitely he uses her - Mallory to just .. she gets all the attention or unwanted attention and then just nature brings up the men and they slaughter them it's like a trap .. she's used as bait I'll have to watch the film to see what the rest of it's like" (MW2)
- P18: "there seemed to be a big hang up with the sex thing because when she was on the car with that guy and he said you're Mallory .. that made her freeze up so it was the one point where she didn't want people to know who she was" (FW1)
- P24: "I suppose that's the first time she's stood up to him isn't it you when they kill him he - well the implication he's sort of contaminated her innocence" (FW2)

The above extracts, therefore, reveal the different mechanisms used by the males and the females, i.e. the violence and the abuse respectively, to make sense of the scenes viewed. Although what is shared across the gender divide is the way in which participants lacking full experiential context of *Natural Born Killers* become confused. Nevertheless, an ability to make sense of the stimulus material is revealed in their accounts. To summarise, the code of meaning-making represents participants' continuous attempts to make sense of the scenes viewed regardless of gender and context. However, there is a significant difference in the discourse due to context; those without context demonstrate that it is possible to attribute meanings even when vital information is absent, while those with context confirm that representations of violence

are not easily understood despite being in possession of knowledge about the entire film. The role of context, therefore is more profound in the code of meaning-making than that of gender.

(v) Human Condition

The meaninglessness and psychological aspects of the violence of which participants speak continue to be poignant in the code of the human condition. Basically, the extraordinary nature of the representations of violence in *Natural Born Killers* and the gravity of the violent acts committed by Mickey and Mallory are such that participants question the humanity of the murderous couple. Perhaps the most obvious way that this is revealed is through participants' discussions about the suggested link between the lead characters and animal behaviour. Each of the four groups was aware of the animal imagery within the film and formulated ideas about what this means, for example:

P27: "the animals in it show that violence is a natural thing as well as a human created thing

P23: like the scorpion

P5: we're going back to our roots

P8: natural born killers

P23: we're just more sophisticated .. because we've got guns" (MW1)

P24: "there's an obvious connection as well between the animals isn't there

P25: natural born killers

P24: natural born killers is probably a sentence you would immediately associate with animals but then I suppose that's what they're being isn't it they're being animals

P32: yes because the clips at the beginning were all predatory animals weren't they

P24: was that a scorpion that was crushed in the road .. because that's quite interesting isn't it was that sort of

P7: symbolic" (FW2)

P33: "I think there was also a part in it when they ran a scorpion over and there was the dead animal under the car .. and I think it was perhaps comparing the fact that the people who got killed were no better than them .. because they were killing animals anyway and it's perhaps comparing between you know why should killing humans be wrong if killing animals is alright you know that sort of thing .. but you're obviously not allowed to kill humans but I think they're trying to show that about it do you know what I mean" (MC1)

P45: "there's a lot of animal imagery with it all and it's sort of like - it seems to me it's implying that .. ev - everyone's an animal therefore

everyone must kill each other and .. they're killing other humans you know just because they can because it's human instinct it's not - er tut animal instinct .. like it's disturbing because humans are meant to be superior .. but at the end of the day" (FC2)

In these extracts the similarities of Mickey and Mallory's behaviour to that of animals are emphasised which suggests that participants are defining their violence as inhuman. This is an easy conclusion to draw for two reasons; the imagery displayed by the film makers strongly implies this connection but it also permits participants to dissociate themselves from the criminal heroes because they are perceived as subhuman. One of the female participants, however, believes that categorising Mickey and Mallory with animal predators is a mistake because of this very reason:

P37: "yes there was the scorpions and then there was the tattoo on her stomach which I never even noticed before but .. I don't like it when they link in animals because on the one hand you've got what's natural and sort of acceptable in one environment linked into humans and it sort of dehumanises everything" (FC1)

The temptation to ostracise Mickey and Mallory from the human sphere is also prompted by the impression that they enjoy killing, a notion present throughout the corpus:

P5: "they get off on violence shown at the end with the I love you" (MW1)

P19: "they went through life killing people to get a kick off it" (FW1)

P3: "but they do enjoy it as well don't they
P33: oh yes they do enjoy it yes" (MC1)

P35: "she seemed to get pleasure out of it" (FC2)

Those without the full context of *Natural Born Killers* also demonstrate their detachment from Mickey and Mallory through defining them as "loonies" (P4) who are incapable of showing emotion:

P4: "I think they're loonies
P12: yes I haven't got a problem with that they're not all there
P4: a product of American society" (MW1)

P11: "twisted
P17: they've got a problem" (FW1)

P25: "it's like they feel no remorse at all like they're not human" (FW2)

P24: " the first scene there wasn't even emotion on their parts was there really" (FW2)

These sentiments are echoed and elaborated upon by those who have seen the film in its entirety:

P39: "I think you see that they .. erm they don't care who they kill which is shown by the bit at the end when she's doing the eeny meeny miny mo thing which is like we have to leave someone but we'll just like as soon as that woman's shown signs of fear she thinks oh we're going to kill her it shows they have no remorse for what they've done" (MC2)

P36: "it's like the second scene you know when he - Mickey wacks the Dad across the face with the iron bar and first of all when she screams I thought she was shocked that she was saying oh my god what're you doing don't do it .. but then you realise that it's elation and she starts giggling and clapping hands and for me .. during that scene I thought my god she'd got a learning disability because .. this is going to sound really awful now .. and I don't mean it to .. but it's that sort of [claps her hands in the air] sort of clapping like that this and oh yes and you know" (FC1)

The added context to which these participants have access facilitates their ability to make sense of the information with which they are confronted. As the previous examples from those without context show, however, the difference in the discourse of those with context is simply one of depth of information and evaluation rather than a distinct point of view. The effect of this added contextual knowledge is illustrated in the participants' evaluations of Mickey and Mallory's humanity and the implications this has on their own experiences of the film. For instance, the males and females with context both suggest that *Natural Born Killers* forces the viewers to question their own humanity:

P3: "I thought it was asking difficult questions - in how you respond to it like I said at the beginning when you see the people go in the rednecks and the guy who goes up dancing with her is obviously .. not a pleasant individual and you know that something's going to happen to him .. because of the title of the film for a start and all the hype that surrounds it but .. you're curious as to what - what does that say about you and how you respond to the violence I mean I don't know whether it is gratuitous in that it does ask certain questions" (MC1)

P36: "I think what he was trying to say as well in terms of this is what people watch - people watch violent films and they get pleasure from it and this is what he was saying .. you're sitting here watching this film and you're having a reaction to it you might not be laughing like the canned laughter that was played over but you're watching it and enjoying it because .. going to see a film is an enjoyable experience .. so taking the piss out of the people who have gone to see his film maybe or .. I don't know criticising them or making them think about why they come and watch a film like that I don't know" (FC1)

Those who have seen the entire film identify their own process of questioning the nature of humanity as particularly challenging. P37, below, discusses how she did not relate to Mickey or Mallory because they represent that quality of humankind which is taboo within Western culture, the potential to kill:

P37: "I think the whole point is that you don't - well I certainly didn't because it's so extreme .. because the roles are reversed and because it's continuous violence which sort of escalates from the one beforehand .. you sort of detach yourself from not making any links to how you would react you sort of justify their behaviour within the film but you don't actually want to because of how you view the film and all the connections within it .. you don't actually make the links to yourself because then .. you're admitting things about yourself that you don't like which you don't tend to do so I think .. you look at that film in a very different way to how you look at yourself and I just think it was so extreme that you don't relate it to yourself at all and it's such a detached experience I don't - I can't remember the whole film but I remember watching it and it sort of becomes a plain that is so abnormal because it's so repeated throughout the whole thing" (FC1)

One of the male participants takes this notion further by suggesting that Mickey and Mallory's violence represents the fantasy of killing someone who has done you a wrong:

P33: "everybody they kill is someone who has annoyed them .. or has got on their nerves and I know - like me personally .. when you're driving down the road and someone cuts you up you'll swear your head off get it out of your system and that'll be the end of it or .. say you're served badly at a bar you probably won't say anything to them but you'll go away and moan about it to your friends or whatever
P3: it's acting out the fantasy of shooting somebody that's really annoyed you" (MC1)

These excerpts reveal the similarities in the distancing mechanisms employed by both men and women. This detachment also manifests itself in participants' talk about morality; the participants believe that Mickey and Mallory lack any moral obligation which would prevent a law abiding citizen from behaving in such a destructive manner:

P34: "the difference is - is that we are individuals that have been brought up by a set of values a set of beliefs that violence - that say to us that violence is wrong

P33: take those values away

P34: which they have done - Mickey - the violence is there she knows nothing different Mickey - it was suggested that he shot his father and his father did seem to be one hell of a bigot so .. the violence is there so you take away the rules the values that we have you know they're doing what is the norm for them but it's not for us because of our beliefs and our values" (MC1)

P41: "they seemed quite happy all the way through didn't they I don't think they inhabit the same moral universe .. I don't think he had any idea when he was being confronted with moral scriptures that were supposed to impose restrictions on your behaviour he didn't even identify on the most basic level with the - the kind of moral aspects Robert Downey Junior was coming out with .. you know his reality was rooted in .. the notions he had of purity and demons love but they weren't the sort of erm .. modern liberal values of .. the vital human life human essence he was totally disengaged with any conversation on morals on that sort of level it didn't register" (MC2)

P46: "whereas we wouldn't perhaps go around shooting people and burning people alive .. but you would think of a different system of how you would deal with the situation .. whereas she didn't know any other way - she couldn't see any way out apart from actually killing the people and that's the same thing it's her emotions and her emotions came out like any other - like someone else's emotions would come out in a different way" (FC1)

However, both the males and females with context reveal that *Natural Born Killers* reminds them that violence and murder are as intrinsic as love and compassion in the entity that is the human condition. This is demonstrated through the ways in which participants consider the eventuality of an average individual becoming a murderer as well as through the normal behaviours which are attributed to Mickey and Mallory:

P40: "I thought it was good in the beginning where you got erm .. like they were cutting a pie thing in with like normal people just like coffee or whatever sort of like showing normal things of killers I don't know if he meant do that but you got like a shot of a big snake and then they shot it like the cup of coffee and you thought this is a bit weird it's not what you'd normally mix in .. it sort of explained why

because when they were sort of killing each other they were like normal people" (MC2)

P34: "looking at that now and thinking about it I'd compare it more with *Lord of the Flies* .. reading the book the violence there because .. the violence there - we are civilised individuals in inverted commas and then if you compare them with the school kids from *Lord of the Flies* and the violence they display towards each other on the island and now you see it then as well when they're out on the road I suppose" (MC1)

P44: "that could be reinforcing the fact that it's within every normal human being .. any mister and misses average in their camper van with their three kids could have been killers

P42: yes that's true

P44: or have the potential to kill" (FC2)

This code reveals that the experience of watching *Natural Born Killers* forces participants to confront aspects of the human condition which are usually ignored or even rejected because of the difficulties they evoke. The discourse in each of the groups reveals participants' active attempts to detach themselves from the murderous characters of Mickey and Mallory, however, those with context are able to investigate this detachment in more depth and find that *Natural Born Killers* conveys the message that any human being is capable of murder. This provokes a fear within participants, illustrated through their dissociation mechanisms, because it compels them to realise that all human beings are made of the same stuff and therefore are potentially as violent as Mickey and Mallory. This belief is the same, regardless of gender and context, even those without context display a simplified expression of it. In short, all the participants in Study 3 place considerable significance on the qualities of the human condition in order to attribute meanings to the violence they experience via *Natural Born Killers*. This emphasis on the humanness of Mickey and Mallory's characters is also evident in the code of rationalisations of violence.

(vi) Rationalisations of Violence

The code of rationalisations of violence constitutes that discourse which shows the mechanisms employed by participants to justify the representations of violence witnessed in the three clips. There are two general methods of justifying the violence experienced in *Natural Born Killers*: either it is justified in terms of its necessity in the context of the film to tell the story or reasons for the violence are postulated through the context of Mickey and Mallory's life histories. P14, a female without context, believes

that the representations of violence are legitimate within the context of the film and Ps 38 and 40, males with context, agree:

P14: "I didn't think any of it was gratuitous you needed the violence to show the mindlessness of the killing" (FW1)

P38: "it was something they needed to do to progress in the film .. it was the revenge of .. for them to move on as characters" (MC2)

P40: "yes I think it had a - all the violence there had a reason it's not like .. they were showing every time they killed someone they it showed why they did it" (MC2)

The men justify the use of violence in *Natural Born Killers* because reasons were given as to why it was necessary. P14 takes a different stance; she believes that representations of violence are legitimate in this film in order to portray the meaninglessness of killing.

The remainder of this code deals largely with the events portrayed in the three clips and the aspects of Mickey and Mallory's characters which participants believe are responsible for their violence. This notion of responsibility is a recurring theme throughout the code of rationalisations of violence; some justify Mickey and Mallory's violence in ways which absolve them of any responsibility while others refuse to vindicate them in this way. The following two examples from inquiry group MW2 illustrate both sides of this debate. The first extract reveals that these men are targeting society and mental health as causes of Mickey and Mallory's violence, while the second suggests problems inherent within this interpretation:

P4: "I think they're loonies

P12: yes I haven't got a problem with that they're not all there

P4: a product of American society" (MW2)

P4: "it takes all the responsibility out of the violence and it's alright for them because .. they've been dealt poorly by society so it portrays them as being justified in doing what they're doing" (MW2)

The males who had seen *Natural Born Killers* also are troubled because acts of violence which cannot be justified in their eyes are portrayed as such in the film:

P3: "you never did nothing that's kind of .. an attempt to justify it before it happens isn't it [. .] skipping forward to the third scene .. her

Dad's face was intercut wasn't it about three times I don't know whether that's supposed to show the effect it's had on her throughout her life .. it's almost well if you can justify it .. it justifies it almost after it's happened" (MC1)

P41: "what was - you know the root causes behind it and I thought - sort of thought Woody Harrelson's religious mania and Juliette Lewis's psychosis .. was what I got the impression were the things rooted behind it" (MC2)

Nevertheless, despite their concerns the males with context do find ways of legitimating the violence in *Natural Born Killers*. The film includes scenes (including the second clip shown to the inquiry groups, *Scene 6: Mickey and Mallory kill her parents*) informing the viewer that Mallory suffered incessant sexual abuse at the hands of her father until she murdered him with her lover, Mickey. There are similar suggestions regarding Mickey's childhood although less emphasis is placed on these, both in the film's narrative and in participants' responses: it is implied that Mickey's mother was abusive toward him and that at a young age he witnessed his father commit suicide (this information is not available in the three clips shown to the inquiry groups). Mallory's abuse is prominent throughout the corpus in participants' rationalisations of her violence, for example:

P33: "so like as she was basically .. as probably in the first scene she was taking her aggression out - of what had happened to her on other people and there was also the fact that she was making a point with the guy when they were doing it on the car .. she was saying do you think I'm beautiful do you think I'm sexy like she was unsure of it herself .. she didn't know possibly because she'd been made to feel dirty or whatever in the past like she'd gone out to specifically pick up someone to prove to herself that she could to prove that she was okay because Mickey had just had a row with her apparently and she was probably feeling rejected and hurt" (MC1)

P25: "it's all that thing like we were saying .. if she's been attacked by her father it's almost okay for her to - doing this kind of thing it justifies it a little bit .. that's the same as if we see in real life a woman being raped and then her killing her rapist we seem to accept it without thinking but it's still wrong to kill him

P7: it's a bit more understandable isn't it" (FW2)

P35: "I can't relate to any kind of violent person because I don't agree with violence but .. if she's been abused as a child and she's obviously disturbed - it's disturbed her upbringing and how she's turned out - I don't know she was brought up that major factor would make her insane .. criminally insane as it turns out .. I'm not saying

what she did was right but I can understand from her point of view it wasn't her choice to be brought up like that she didn't have any choice in the way she was brought up" (FC1)

The extract above from FC1 underlines a key point in participants' rationalisations of Mallory's violence, they believe that "she didn't have any choice" (P35), which echoes the previous extracts from this code releasing the characters from their responsibilities. This is contrasted with participants' willingness to condemn Mickey. The females without context are not aware of the details of Mickey's childhood and so perhaps understandably believe he is not justified in his actions. However, as the second example below shows, P7 was cautious of making this assumption:

P14: "we know why she kills because she's had a twisted upbringing but we don't know for him whether it's just for the hell of it" (FW1)

P24: "she's got a screw loose but maybe she's not actually psycho because he didn't seem to have any reason to do it

P7: yes but just because they didn't show you a reason doesn't mean he hasn't got one

P24: I know but she had an obvious reason when she was doing it and he didn't have one .. and also because he was going to go after her brother for no apparent reason too and every time she's done it there has been a reason okay it's been a very very poor reason perhaps but there's been a reason whereas he didn't seem to have had one" (FW2)

Those who had seen the entire film, on the other hand, knew about Mickey's past but paid it little attention:

P36: "as a little boy he was really cute and you saw him in black and he actually witnessed his own father commit suicide through a blow to the head and I think his father was verbally abusive before he committed the suicide so maybe yes .. I forgot about that he seemed to be more characterless Mallory had more character she was a better developed character" (FC1)

In fact the majority of the discourse focuses on Mallory's character and the possible reasons why she decided to kill. This suggests that participants, both male and female, do not need to discover Mickey's personality in order to make his violence meaningful, yet Mallory's violence is without meaning until facts about her past are understood. This position confirms that more effort is awarded to the justification of Mallory's violence suggesting that this is a more difficult task due to the irregularity of it. The different approaches to the characters of Mickey and Mallory may be due to the film's

break away from the stereotypical portrayal of an active, violent male and a passive, peaceful female. Moreover, contemporary Western culture tends to dichotomise male and female violence; a simplistic way in which this can be illustrated is in the short-sighted view that a man who is violent is displaying his masculinity, whereas a woman's violence is conceived as a betrayal of her femininity. Nevertheless, participants' discourse does reveal a distinction between the responses to Mickey as a violent man and to Mallory as a violent woman.

The code of rationalisations of violence therefore reveals that gender and context do not play significant roles in the ways in which participants justify the violence in *Natural Born Killers*. The data does show, however, that to rationalise the violence in this film is not an easy process. This is illustrated in participants' doubts about whether or not violence of this nature can be justified together with their refusal to vindicate Mickey. The factors which do contribute to participants' rationalisations are concerned with the quality of life which the characters of Mickey and Mallory have experienced, or rather lacked, due to social circumstances. What is most significant in the ways in which the violence in *Natural Born Killers* is rationalised is through participants' removal of responsibility from the equation. Mickey and Mallory's violence is justified because it is considered to be out of their control and therefore not due to their being human.

(vii) No Justification for Violence

The code of no justification for violence further illustrates the difficulties experienced by participants through stressing those aspects of the violence in *Natural Born Killers* which participants cannot rationalise. The extracts below from males and females without context reveal that a lack of provocation renders justification a difficult task and the males with context confirm this through their assumption that that would be the case for someone who had not watched the entire film:

P23: "the woman with the coffee didn't do anything to her" (MW1)

P32: "it's highly likely that she's been attracted to a very violent man .. which is what Mickey was because the scene when they were in the diner he could have easily said no that's my girlfriend .. you can't say things like that but no he decided he was going to gut him with a knife .. and things like that and he could have easily said look I'm taking her away in that house he didn't" (FW2)

P28: "and there is no provocation I mean .. potentially you could argue that there is provocation in the first scene but there wasn't in the

second scene or from watching that clip you don't know there is"
(MC1)

The females in the sample display their reluctance to justify the violence in *Natural Born Killers* in a different manner. They concentrate on Mallory's violence and their discourse reveals a conflict between the desire to condemn her and a feeling of sympathy for her:

- P14: "I don't think it's right
P11: you can never justify it can you just going out and killing people
P14: but you can have a certain affinity with it
P11: you can't justify it but .. you can't condemn it the same way either .. you can't say she's right because the person she killed in the garage hadn't done anything to her .. as far as we know and she was asking him to come on to her he didn't rape her or anything .. but like you do feel something towards her because - you do get this impression that she's been so crushed all her life and shouted down that she's flipped" (FW1)
P35: "she seemed to want to ensnare people then perhaps before she had some sort of agenda with her parents and now perhaps she needed to kill .. and she just went somewhere and decided to lure him into her trap .. and as soon as he'd done something wrong that's it you're dead and the random violence in that bit" (FC1)

Despite their uncertainty however, those with context resolve the issue because they believe that killing is not a normal reaction to the kind of life Mallory had experienced, thereby concluding that the violence cannot be justified. This is illustrated by both male (P39) and female (P36) participants:

- P38: "what if they're the same weak mind that the character Juliette Lewis has - Mallory if they've had a life like that .. you've been abused
P39: I'm sorry but if you've had a life like then that you deal with it" (MC2)
P36: "I think it's pretty safe to say that that's not a normal reaction to what's happened to her .. plenty of people are abused .. it's a horrible awful thing that happens to them I don't know how many people died in that film .. was it fifty-two people I think it said in the end scene.. but to go out and kill fifty-two people is not a normal reaction to child abuse .. many people wouldn't react like that and I think that's why I didn't have any sympathy for her I don't think" (FC1)

In brief, the discourse in the codes of rationalisations of violence and no justification for violence reveals that the task of rationalising the representations of violence in *Natural*

Born Killers is fraught with contradictions. Participants' conviction to attribute meanings to the killings witnessed in the three clips encourages them to search for justification while their belief that murder is fundamentally wrong goes against this aim. The only difference which occurs due to context is that those who have context are able to confront this problem in more depth due to the fact that they have a more complete understanding of the film's narrative. As the excerpts from the transcripts show, there is no comparable difference due to gender, the men and women in the sample experience the same problems in justifying the violence.

(viii) Symbolism and Message

The remaining codes established in Study 3 are made up of participants' discussions about the wider issues concerning *Natural Born Killers* and violence in the media generally. The code of symbolism and message reveals that participants believe that *Natural Born Killers* is not simply a visual array of violence but that it intends to convey a message about violence:

P3: "I'm thinking of the storyline as being a platform to show that violence and make a point about the violence .. so the violence being the main thing of the film that you come away with rather than a film that tries to tell a story" (MC1)

Participants identify aspects of the film which they believe have symbolic meanings, such as the use of special effects in the first clip (*Scene 1: The Diner*) and the situation-comedy style scenario of the second (*Scene 6: Mickey and Mallory kill her parents*). The interpretation of males without context in reference to these two scenes is clear:

P23: "killing someone is like an art
P8: death is a comedy" (MW1)

The visual effects of the first clip and the comic element of the second are isolated as examples of symbolism by both those with and without context, although those without context do not offer any explanations as to what they may mean:

P12: "when he was hitting him it was like bang .. and there were squidgy noises nothing like beating the hell out of him .. not that violent compared to - and it'd been built up to something that's *really* nasty
P4: it seemed more like a comedy act than anything else
P6: I didn't think it was very funny when they tortured their Mum I didn't find that bit too funny

- P20: we didn't have any background did we
- P4: I know but it's like you just imagine her going ha ha ha and then smacking him with a metal bar and them all going ha ha ha .. very weird" (MW2)
- P7: "again it's like a cartoon .. because cartoons are quite gruesome when you think of *Tom and Jerry* and they hit each other and you hear the noise and you see it
- P24: *Itchy and Scratchy*" (FW2)
- P7: "but it was really ironic the way they did it because there was like the audience going hey .. and there was real nastiness" (FW2)

The extracts above refer to an audience in the second clip; befitting the situation-comedy genre in *Scene 6: Mickey and Mallory kill her parents* includes audience applause and canned laughter. Both the males and females with context suggest that the inclusion of the situation-comedy genre in this film signifies the repressed corruption of the world which Mickey and Mallory inhabit:

- P33: "I have to admit that it's a long time since I've seen the film but I remember that there was something to do with their childhood that was you know - being abused and that .. but I had a picture in my mind that it was more like she'd been brought up in typical like fifties America like in *Blue Velvet* .. with white picket fences and she'd been abused in that kind of - and it had been a repressed sort of thing in that kind of society I hadn't remembered that her Dad was a slob kind of thing" (MC1)
- P3: "with laughter and happy smiley people and everything but the fact is .. he's abusing her and beating her up or whatever and it's like the level you get shown .. and what's actually happening underneath it" (MC1)
- P37: "the whole image of the father - we didn't know what the mother was like .. but the father he wasn't dressed in a business suit was he he was fat .. he was scruffy he had a white vest on and I just think that sort of - it's almost like you can't help but make assumptions can you but that - his image fitted in with what they saying about the abuse of the family and that they were both to rebel against it .. that's why I asked was it black and white because it's sort of distancing you from what because most stuff you see now is in colour whereas in black and white takes you back to a different era that maybe you're not familiar with and it puts things in a different context it doesn't make it more acceptable for what was going on but it makes it" (FC1)
- P36: "there was a lot of I noticed they had one of those lovely 50s sitcoms on the TV which they turn over .. I think it's one of those films I think you have to watch twice to get all of those kind of

references it's like this is how you know reality was portrayed in 50s and everyone knows now that isn't reality - that wasn't peoples' realities children were being abused during the 50s it wasn't all kind of *I Love Lucy* so I think .. those references are interesting [. .] I think that was one of the best scenes in the whole film I have to say and because it was near the beginning I thought oh this is going to be a really interesting analysis of you know .. American violence .. it kept my interest because it was set like 1950s comedy and what was being said was absolutely horrific and the underlying connotations of sexual abuse .. but the audience were laughing at this awful sort of 1950s canned laughter and I thought this is so clever that's such an interesting way of making a comparison between I don't know what he was trying to do whether it was about reality was it about how the media's changed what it represents I thought it was very clever" (FC1)

P36 argues further that through the adoption of a comedy genre popular in the 1950s that *Natural Born Killers* makes a comparison between the media of old and its modern day counterpart. In the past the endemic problems of society, such as abuse and violence, were hidden from the television screen in order to portray an optimistic, if unrealistic, view of the world; today the opposite is becoming the trend, violence, war, abuse and betrayal are commonplace on the big and small screens. This female participant who has seen the film from beginning to end, therefore suggests that the message of *Natural Born Killers* is related to the content of the media. Two of the males with context also believe that *Natural Born Killers* makes a statement about the media, although they disagree about the nature of that statement:

P41: "yes the media was never there as like a root cause to it because when it came to finding a reason behind it he came up with that kind of quasi religious sort of situation about purity of spirit and murder .. erm and you got the feeling that it didn't really come across like you know he was - they were performing for the media there were performative aspects to it like leaving someone alive to tell the tale and the use of the camera at the end but I never I remember thinking that the idea behind it or what I'd heard was that it was caused by sort of media interest but I didn't really get that impression in the film" (MC2)

P38: "I think Oliver Stone was trying to like you say you didn't really see the media thing I think he was trying to say that but I think he failed there because like at the start he had the paper and it said Mickey and Mallory have killed whatever on the back of his paper he was trying to show that he did for some sort of .. Mickey and Mallory are going to be the best .. sort of killers ever they're going to go around route 666 but yes I don't think he got it across very well" (MC2)

P41 tells of how he assumed that *Natural Born Killers* intended to portray the media in a negative light in order to say something about the possibility of media violence causing violence in society. However, having watched the entire film he concludes that that is not the case. The code of effects discourse, the details of which are to be evaluated shortly, reveals that P41 does not believe that the media affects people in this way; P38, on the other hand, does believe in the effects model, a belief which is demonstrated in his interpretation of the film's message. P38 believes that the film intended to warn its audience about the effects media violence can have but that Stone failed in this aim.

As the extracts have shown, those participants without context are as aware as their counterparts with context of the symbolic aspects included in the film, such as the animal imagery and the comic value attributed to *Scene 6: Mickey and Mallory kill her parents*. However, participants with context have an advantage over those without because their added knowledge enables them to formulate more developed theories about what kind of message these symbols convey. The role of gender, on the other hand, does not permeate participants' interpretations of the film's message. The disagreement between P38 and P41, above, and the fact that both male and female participants identify the media as central in the film's message support this finding.

(ix) Media Violence

The code of media violence is linked to this notion that *Natural Born Killers* has a subtext about violence in the media. The males without context simply state that media audiences demand violence in films:

- P23: "people want blood and gore
- P5: most films are violent to make them a hit" (MW1)

While the females in the sample believe that *Natural Born Killers* highlights that film is not the only medium which deals in death and destruction:

- P7: "again it's like a cartoon because cartoons are quite gruesome when you think of *Tom and Jerry* and they hit each other and you hear the noise and you see it
- P24: *Itchy and Scratchy*" (FW2)
- P36: "it's difficult to know how to interpret what he meant to do by that and .. I think as far as I can see the film is about two violent people

but it's also about violent film and the cartoon element - and then you had the classical music the opera when the knife goes through the window .. and I think maybe what he was trying to say is cartoons are violent and you sit and watch a cartoon and it's violent but because it's a cartoon it's fun and cartoon - you let your children watch it and also with the classical element .. this happens in operas that we know are classed as fine art .. people are murdered people are killed and there's violence in that but because this happens to be a film this is going to shock you more and make you more angry because it's a film and it's popular culture" (FC1)

Those participants who have watched the whole of *Natural Born Killers* are aware that the latter half of the film focuses upon a television presenter, Wayne Gayle (Robert Downey Jr.), who conducts a live interview with Mickey for his show, *American Maniacs*. The males with context draw on this portion of the film to illustrate their belief that television exploits violent situations in order to secure its financial success:

- P39: "it was sort of showing in a way the way that the public and media can glorify that sort of thing and try and turn it into like a showbiz event like something to do with popularity and trying to get ratings and things when it was actually like really serious .. I think I think Oliver Stone was the director wasn't he" (MC2)
- P40: "you saw - you saw like erm .. what they're showing on tv it's like mass murder or whatever and you saw like in the prison how they were all cheering for him they were like glorifying him in the end and they were giving this mass murderer all this coverage on the news and you just thought is that right
- P39: it was a bit disrespectful the way like they kept the little camera and they started shooting
- P40: yes like all the victims at home
- P39: the families of victims
- P40: you thought this isn't right is it" (MC2)

Their dislike of the media is also represented by their impressions of Wayne Gayle:

- P34: "the thing with the interview was he was looking at the pinnacle of his career and he was shitting himself" (MC1)
- P33: "that's what I thought that he'd been like oh wow this is the biggest thing of my career and I've got to go along with this .. and they shot him in the end didn't they because he was a bit of an arse" (MC1)

The code of media violence represents participants' concerns about the content of programmes which sensationalise violence in order to increase ratings and make a profit, like the *American Maniacs* programme in the film. Moreover, it illustrates that on

the whole participants are more cautious about this documentary-style genre of programme than they are about the content of fictional films such as *Natural Born Killers*. Gender and context do not influence the conclusions participants draw about violence in the media, except that those with context, due to their knowledge of the role played by Robert Downey Jr., are able to discuss these issues in more depth. The code of the effects discourse is closely connected with these issues as it comprises all the discourse which refers to the effects model and in particular copy cat crime.

(x) The Effects Discourse

The effects discourse was identified previously in Study 2 as one of the pervasive discourses in contemporary culture regarding media violence. Basically, the effects model proposes that watching violence in film will lead viewers to behave violently in real life. This notion of an individual committing a crime because a film influenced them is often referred to as copy cat crime. The code of the effects discourse reveals that all participants are aware of the concept of copy cat crime, in fact recent murder cases which have been linked to films are mentioned:

- P6: "because that recent American school massacre the kids who did it themselves very much glorified it they called themselves the Trenchcoat Mafia and made all these bombs
P4: they probably got their idea from *The Basketball Diaries*
P6: but still that kind of film thing
P4: the James Bulger thing that was
F¹: *Child's Play 3*" (MW2)
- P11: "some people will do it - they'll do copy cat killing but they're in such a minority that you'd end up banning every single film .. because there's always going to be somebody that confuses fantasy with reality and .. they've blamed that shooting on *The Basketball Diaries* and *Heathers* and they're saying everything that happens can be blamed on a film .. I think people should take responsibility for their own actions you can't say well film made me do it
P14: yes because if you're inclined to kill you're going to kill .. regardless of whether you've seen a film the night before" (FW1)

The second extract above demonstrates participants' doubts about whether or not film can be named as a causal factor in criminal activity. In each of the groups, however, opinions are divulged both in favour of and against the argument that media violence influences its audience to commit acts of violence in real life. Two male participants, P8

¹ Facilitator

without context and P38 with context, refer to the well known theory that if traditional campaigns on television successfully influence people to spend or donate money then film violence is also capable of influencing its audience. Both are opposed, however, by others in the inquiry groups:

- P8: "when children get hurt it's blamed on films it's proven that film affects people .. that's how *Comic Relief* works
P27: there's no connection" (MW1)
- P38: "I mean I think people say adverts don't work but they work completely .. for everybody so films affect people
P41: they always affect other people though don't they .. you never meet anyone it affects do you [laughs]
P38: I know
P41: it's always whoever you speak to it's always someone else it affects
P38: adverts don't affect me and you'll go out and you'll buy .. *Kellogg's* and you'll buy .. I think it's the same with films but films don't affect me ..
P41: no me either
P38: they definitely do TV does and people you know do it's just one of those things that adds up to make a person
P41: who are these people who get affected by films
P39: there's a big group of them they live in the shed [laughs]" (MC2)

The differences of opinion are clearly evident in the extracts above, illustrating the disagreement amongst participants which is present throughout the corpus. The general feeling is that some viewers may be influenced by violence experienced via film but that other factors would also contribute to their decision to commit violent acts:

- P12: "obviously films could have an influence .. and they could copy it but like you say they're going to have to be gone in the head to do it but .. having said that films can influence people but I think you have to have something deep down before" (MW2)
- P11: "you can see how they get - the danger of people who copy cat from it because they do look as though they're getting a real high off it and a real power trip .. you can imagine certain people are vulnerable to that kind of image and they'll go out and think that'll give me a buzz because a lot of people well - not a lot but a few people so you see how it could but certain people that would actually affect" (FW1)
- P39: "I couldn't see why anyone would go in that film come out and go right I want to kill someone regardless of like .. it's more likely other stuff in their life rather than just watching one film" (MC2)

P35: "it's like you were saying because the media portrayal of serial killers and murders on the street or whatever .. I mean I don't believe in this copycat - there must be some people who copy what they've seen on a film there must be but generally .. you and me wouldn't go out and say oh I've seen the Yorkshire Ripper on the telly and I'm not going to go out and kill thirteen women now because if you can do it I'm sure I can .. I don't know it's" (FC1)

The doubt within participant accounts also demonstrates the complexities involved in attempting to attribute blame for real life violence to that portrayed in film:

P4: "these films are a reflection of society aren't they .. so inevitably these films are based on society so you can't say films affect the way society acts because they're actually based on society anyway .. swings and roundabouts

P6: it depends which way you look at it do you say that the films influence society or that society influences films" (MW2)

P11: "is it a reflection of society or a reflection of films" (FW1)

The code of effects discourse does not vary therefore according to gender or context but is a matter of personal opinion.

(xi) Comparison to Real Life

In many of the groups this discussion about the effects of media violence was extended to cover actual events which have occurred recently. The code of comparison to real life comprises a collection of discourse which reveals participants' ideas about whether or not the violence portrayed in *Natural Born Killers* could be assimilated to a real life scenario. The males with context believe that instances of incestuous abuse happen in real life while the females with context believe that the murder of parents and the prison riot are likely real life occurrences:

P28: "it's difficult to imagine a mother not knowing
P33: or at least not attempting to do anything about it
P28: but then you hear about it all the time the woman doesn't know"
(MC1)

P38: "the family situation
P39: what you mean not the killing just as far as //
P38: as far as beating - and then probably not dying but because he was obviously a lot of fathers fiddle with their daughters erm .. which definitely happens and then boyfriends would beat up the fathers
P39: yes I could see that happening" (MC2)

P42: "and you often hear of people who kill their Mum and Dad" (FC2)

P42: "yes and the riots in the jails .. it's quite scary that because if you think about it they could do that any time and they wouldn't have enough people to control it" (FC2)

Common to all participants, male and female, with and without context, was reference to the recent murders in the schools of Dunblane in Scotland and Denver in the United States of America. The males without context and females with context below compare the meaninglessness of Mickey and Mallory's murders with these real life instances:

P8: "for some reason people go out and kill people for no reason like those kids in Denver .. why" (MW1)

P42: "the gun thing in America .. the shootings in school things like that .. just like mass //

P43: Dunblane or whatever //

P42: killing for no reason

P44: they're just killing those people just because they can" (FC2)

While the females without context and males with context both identify the issue of power as a common factor:

P19: "it's a bit like that thing that happened in Denver where them lads went in and shot all them kids in that school

P11: yes it is isn't it

P19: because they were all supposed to be .. Nazi supporters and they did it on Hitler's birthday and it was supposed to be a celebration of Hitler's birthday and like Dunblane when that nutter went in

P11: that's just killing for a power thing .. not killing because they've got anything against people .. I know they had a vendetta they only went for sport people and popular people they didn't go for anyone that was a bit different but it isn't the same kind of thing" (FW1)

P39: "things like erm .. that high school massacre in America I think that's awful

P38: they were doing it because they were sort of jocks they were sports blokes

P39: the people who were killing they were out casts basically in their own group

P38: they were trying to say that these people had bad morals they were good at sport" (MC2)

One of the female participants who has watched the whole of *Natural Born Killers*, P36, looks more deeply at these events in the context of peoples' responses to film violence:

P36: "yes it's make believe it's acting the blood isn't real and all the rest of it but it always interests me in terms of the gun culture in America the Columbine High School thing the kindergarten there was that crazed gunman who went in and started shooting people and there's I don't know - I don't know what I'm trying to say here .. that shocks people so much whenever it happens you know America is absolutely outraged and yet in films like that when it's on film you know it's okay because hey it's Hollywood and it's not real and when the reality actually happens and people are actually shot it's people are just disgusted or shocked" (FC1)

She is suggesting that American culture contradicts itself through its simultaneous support of films such as *Natural Born Killers* and its condemnation of the people involved in shootings like the one in Columbine High School, Denver. This question of culture is covered more thoroughly in the next code of cultural differences. As far as comparing the violence in *Natural Born Killers* to that which has happened in real life, then, the opinions of participants are not affected by gender or whether or not they have watched the whole film. The excerpts reveal similarities between the four groups of participants rather than any fundamental differences.

(xii) Cultural Differences

Natural Born Killers is an American film, it is written and directed by American men and is set in America. Those without full contextual knowledge of *Natural Born Killers* did not consider the affect of culture in their interpretations of the clips viewed but those with context seriously contemplate the differences between British and American culture. Both the males and females assume that America is more accepting of violence than Britain due to the different laws regarding gun licensing and the defence of property:

P3: "well that's because of their constitution though isn't it .. I think that's why it's such an ingrained part of their history

P34: yes I know .. with my American relatives I was surprised when they didn't lock their house .. they said well don't worry if someone breaks in we'll sort it they don't lock their cars they don't lock their cars where they work we don't do that here" (MC1)

P33: "the licence laws are nowhere near as strict are they you can like .. again this country you've got to have a licence and you've got to have a metal cabinet to lock it in" (MC1)

P36: "and I think for Americans as well violence is more acceptable I mean it's legal if somebody trespassed or comes into your house to

steal you're within your rights to shoot them if that happened in England you'd be charged with manslaughter" (FC1)

P35: "it's different morals isn't it

P37: it's different boundaries of what is acceptable

P36: so violence is more okay if it's in self defence" (FC1)

However, these views may be more an illustration of participants wishing to distance themselves from the violence portrayed in *Natural Born Killers* than a serious evaluation of two national cultures. That is not to say that cultural differences do not exist but the tone of discourse in this code, as well as previous ones, suggests that participants experience an amount of discomfort when faced with the visual reality of murder. Consequently, rather than having to deal with making sense of what is perceived as unjustifiable killing, participants render it meaningless by dismissing it as foreign or inhuman. Again, participants' discourse in this code reflects a united front instead of emphasising differences which may occur according to gender and context. The issues of real life violent atrocities and of the effects model go beyond gender distinctions and the intricacies of this particular film and as such evoke views from participants which are not dependent upon these factors.

(xiii) Impression of the Film

The final analytic code revealed in the inquiry groups contains participants' impressions of the film. For those without context it is a collection of admissions by participants about whether or not they would like to watch *Natural Born Killers* in its entirety, for instance:

F: "do you want to watch the whole thing now?

P4: no

P6: only because I'd be interested //

P20: curiosity //

P6: in seeing how it finished and what the rest of the film was like having seen the clips but not let's have a great evening and watch that" (MW2)

P12: "I don't think I could sit through it to be honest I think it'd be really excruciating" (MW2)

P11: "probably not the type of film I'd watch

P14: it's the type of film I'd watch" (FW1)

P32: "I do want to watch the entire film now because I want to know what's happened" (FW2)

P25: "I want to see it I'm intrigued now" (FW2)

For those who have seen the whole film this code simply reveals whether or not participants enjoyed it, which aspects were appreciated and which were disliked. None of the males said that they enjoyed the film but they do describe it as entertaining:

F: "so did you like it did you enjoy the film when you watched it?"

P3: no I didn't no

P33: no not particularly no" (MC1)

P41: "it kept you entertained didn't it .. there were no boring bits" (MC2)

P40: "as a film it keeps you going the whole .. however long it is .. it's not really what you'd call the dull bits is there

P39: no there's always something happening all the way through they were always introducing somebody new" (MC2)

The females' impression of *Natural Born Killers* is similar although they give a more detailed account about exactly what they enjoyed and disliked. The first three extracts represent the positive aspects of *Natural Born Killers* while the remaining ones are more negative:

P35: "I did actually like the film - it was a good film it had me glued to the screen and I wouldn't say the violence was necessary in it but .. I think it was for the film to be as good as it was I think if it wasn't as violent then people would have said it's just another violent film but I think this shocked to the core really" (FC1)

P36: "it was it was cleverly written cleverly shot as I say it wasn't a bad film I've walked out of well - the only film I've ever walked out of was *One Fine Day* because it was just stupid but that makes a point I like it when directors make a film to make a point" (FC1)

F: "did you enjoy the film

P45: yes

P44: yes

P43: yes

P42: no I didn't like it

P44: to be honest with you I was surprised

P43: yes I was surprised I liked it" (FC2)

P46: "as a film if you're not - if you're just going to watch it and not with the intent of knowing who he is and what the film is meant to be about then .. it's just a horrible film and it's just you know loud and too gory and whatever but I suppose once you think about it and him doing certain things like the media and the violence .. I suppose

it's quite good in that respect but only because I've actually thought about it if you know what I mean" (FC1)

P37: "I think one thing I didn't like about *Natural Born Killers* is nothing is left to your imagination .. you know a killing is a killing in their form and you actually see how it is done and it's quite hard to - unless you move away - yourself away from - you end up watching how they've presented that death or that piece of violence and that's what I didn't like because it's in your face all the time it's not like a shooting where you just imagine the next bit of just don't think about it you actually see full on killings I didn't like it it was too much" (FC1)

The code of impression of the film illustrates that watching *Natural Born Killers* is not simply a matter of enjoyment but that many factors contribute to participants' experiencing of it. Although only a small minority of females with context state that they enjoyed watching the film, several aspects such as its ability to maintain attention, to entertain and its intention to make a statement about violence in contemporary popular culture, are appreciated by participants in other groups. These assets therefore contribute to making *Natural Born Killers* a positive experience in spite of the negative aspects identified.

The Roles of Gender and Context

The gender of participants and the level of contextual knowledge about *Natural Born Killers* were the focus of this study and the codes which evolved out of the analysis provide valuable insights into the roles they play. The code of comparison to other films reveals a clear divide in the ways in which men and women interpret the violence in *Natural Born Killers*. The male participants place emphasis on the physicality of the representations of violence in the film through reference to other films which they believe are more visually violent. The women in the sample, on the other hand, focus on the psychological aspects of the violence both in terms of the way it is portrayed and the impact it has upon them when watching it. Differences due to gender are also illustrated in the codes of breakdown of typical film formula and meaning-making. The former reveals that both genders identify facets of *Natural Born Killers* which are distinct from other popular violent films, although these are different. The males believe that *Natural Born Killers* breaks away from tradition because of the absence of the usual hero-villain dichotomy while the females identify the irregularity of Mallory's character as a departure from the typical portrayal of women in modern film. The latter code of meaning-making confirms for a second time that the males highlight the

physicality of violence while the females are more concerned with the psychological issues. The men refer to the details of Mickey and Mallory's violent behaviour, such as whether or not there appears to be provocation for the murders they commit, to make sense of them. Whereas the women relate Mallory's behaviour to the fact that she was abused by her father and the psychological effect this has had on her personality.

This theme continues in the codes of rationalisations of violence and no justification for violence. Before moving on to the details of the individual acts of violence themselves, several participants justify the level of violence in *Natural Born Killers* in terms of the film as a text. The men use the reasons given in the film as a guide in their justification while the women are only able to rationalise the presence of violence in this film because it conveys the mindlessness of killing. Similarly, the males emphasise the lack of provocation when they interpret the violence as unjustifiable but the women are more concerned with how Mallory is able to kill. In short, these codes provide evidence of a gender divide in participants' interpretations of the violence in *Natural Born Killers*. The men in the sample turn to the physicality of violence as a frame of reference when evaluating this film and the women's reading is based upon the psychological aspects of both how the violence is portrayed and received in the act of watching.

Those codes which highlight the differences due to the level of familiarity with the key text demonstrate that context is crucial in formulating a detailed interpretation. This is a particularly crucial finding because individuals' understanding of violent film narrative has remained an under developed component both in traditional research and in the more recent audience research. The codes of breakdown of typical film formula, comparison to other films, and symbolism and message display simply that those who have watched *Natural Born Killers* in its entirety are able to offer more substantial interpretations than those who have not. Additionally, the impression of the film code, as expected, reveals rather different material because those with context provide evaluations of the film as a whole whilst those without state whether or not *Natural Born Killers* is the kind of film they would enjoy.

The code of cultural differences is made up wholly of discourse from the inquiry groups with context. This may be due to the fact that those with context are aware of the emphasis placed on the media coverage of Mickey and Mallory's murders in the latter half of the film and, hence, they begin to wonder about how this would be portrayed

differently on British television. Or it may simply be due to the fact that those who had seen the film prior to the inquiry group had more time to consider the cultural differences between Britain and America.

In the code of meaning-making a fundamental difference due to context is exposed. The discourse of participants who have access to the complete context of *Natural Born Killers* reveals constant efforts to make sense of the scenes viewed and on occasions includes lengthy discussions about why Mickey and Mallory behave in such a violent manner. The codes of rationalisations of violence, no justification for violence, and human condition reveal the difficulties faced by participants in their attempts to make meaningful the violence in *Natural Born Killers*. However, these struggles are not in vain because participants with context are able to make sense of the film. Those without context, on the other hand, cannot refer to the whole text in their interpretations of the three clips. Nevertheless, despite this gap in their experience, those who have not watched the entire film do find ways of making sense of it. In the absence of the full context these participants display a continuous striving for meaning which is represented by the way that false reasons for events are conjured up by participants in order to create some kind of continuity in the clips. In short, those with context make full use of their contextual knowledge in the difficult process of meaning-making while those without context reveal an intrinsic need to attribute meanings to the clips in order to overcome the discomfort created by the absence of context.

There are a number of analytic codes which are not dependent upon gender and context in the ways described above, however. These are codes which reflect more widespread aspects of experiencing film violence. For instance, the codes of comparison to real life, media violence and the effects discourse do not vary according to the gender of participants or the level of familiarity with the text. Instead these codes reflect basic assumptions made by individuals in their general evaluations of media violence; the discourse revealed is borne out of personal convictions and experience rather than differences due to gender and having seen or not seen *Natural Born Killers* from beginning to end. This is demonstrated by disagreements between participants of the same sex and common beliefs between those with and without context, for example.

The codes of rationalisations of violence, no justification for violence, and symbolism and message also do not vary significantly according to gender and context. All participants agree that *Natural Born Killers* has some message to convey and that symbolic images are used to this end. Moreover, all participant groups refer to Mallory's abuse, Mickey's natural affinity with killing, and their lack of parental affection in childhood, as reasons for their violence. The theme which pervades the codes of rationalisations of violence and no justification for violence is responsibility; through participants' efforts to make sense of the violent acts in the film Mickey and Mallory are stripped of all responsibility. It is neither gender nor context which influence participants' judgements in these codes, but their humanness. The code of the human condition reflects this finding more clearly. If the responsibility of Mickey and Mallory's violence is attributed to social factors, rather than to them as active agents, it need not be viewed as human.

Throughout the corpus the difficulties of attaching meanings to the perceived unjustifiable violence are evident. Although rationalisations are offered as to why Mickey and Mallory become murderers, their violence remains essentially meaningless unless it is defined in terms of being human. In order both to ease the discomfort of being unable to attribute meaning to the actions portrayed in *Natural Born Killers* and to avoid admitting that all human beings, including themselves, are potentially capable of murder, participants distance themselves from the main characters by referring to them as subhuman. The function that this dissociation from Mickey and Mallory fulfils is one of postponing the process of meaning-making by excluding violence from the human realm. This empirical evidence performs the same function as psychological theories of violence and aggression have done in the past. For instance, both instinctivist and the behaviourist theories attribute the occurrence of violence to a force, either internal or external, which is outside of the actor's control. In doing this, psychology has bypassed the task of understanding why individuals behave violently. The participants in this study have provided living examples of this unwillingness to approach violence as a human phenomenon. This is exactly the kind of resistance referred to in May's (1972) and Fromm's (1973) humanistic-existential theories of violence. It is humankind's reticence to acknowledge the humanness of violence that has perpetuated psychology's lack of progress in understanding the occurrence of violence.

To summarise, the research question concerning the role of gender has been answered. The findings reveal that gender is significant in the male emphasis on physical violence and the female emphasis on the psychological aspects of watching representations of violence. Additionally, the question inquiring about the role of context has also been successfully answered. Experiencing film violence with complete contextual knowledge enables a more complete understanding of the film's violence. Moreover, the lack of context confirms the human necessity to attribute meanings to experiences of film violence. Therefore, the role of context is crucial to individuals' meaning-making process. Further, in response to the final research question posed in this study, the rationalisations of violence in film have been found to be dependent upon the human context, that is, violence can only be made meaningful if it is considered as an ingredient of the human condition.

6.5 Summary of Findings

The findings of Study 3 reveal that experiencing violence via the medium of popular film is not straightforward but involves a number of complex mechanisms. Additionally, they support the conclusions of the previous two studies through confirming that the process of attributing meanings to scenes of violence is dependant upon the ways in which it is contextualised. The emphasis found in participants' discourse on the context of *Natural Born Killers* as a text and the process of making sense of its narrative provides valuable insight into the ways in which film violence should be approached by psychologists. Rather than continuing the somewhat inappropriate focus upon behavioural theories, such as the social learning theory, much can be learned from the disciplines of literary theory, history and cultural studies. As the findings of this study have shown, it is the multifaceted contextual experiencing of film and the act of making sense of it as a form of narrative that are crucial to individuals' interpretations of violence. The fact that telling and retelling stories is an ingrained component of everyday life has been demonstrated in participants' experiential accounts. Furthermore, it is clear from the review in Chapter 2 of the history of violence in popular culture that experiencing violence vicariously as some kind of storytelling has persisted throughout civilised society. Hence, the practice of watching film violence needs to be understood in terms of the cultural and historical phenomenon it has become.

The role of gender is reflected through the different emphases men and women place on representations of violence, as previous research has suggested (Schlesinger et al,

1999; Morrison et al, 1999; Hill, 1997; Schlesinger et al, 1992). In addition, through their focus on Mallory's psychological make-up in their judgements of her violence, the women in the sample display a closer identification with this female character than with Mickey. More significant in the codes established, however, is the role of context. The data reveals that contextual factors are at work throughout participants' interpretations of *Natural Born Killers* on two levels: first, knowledge of the entire film enables a more detailed account because it contextualises the violence insofar as it is understood in terms of the film's narrative; second, the contextual information within the story and the characters of Mickey and Mallory permeate all attempts to attribute meaning to the representations of violence in the film.

A further difference between the discourse of those with context and those without is the way in which they make sense of the scenes witnessed. In the absence of the full context of *Natural Born Killers* participants display a concerted effort to make meaningful the images experienced and in so doing will make false assumptions. This is crucial because it confirms that participants' major objective in watching a dramatisation of violence is to discover its meaning. Those who have experienced *Natural Born Killers* in its entirety also express this same striving to make meaning in the scenes experienced. Their discourse reveals that making sense of violence is not an easy task. Despite their knowledge of the narrative, and the characters' histories, participants are challenged by the possibility that the violence witnessed is without meaning.

Being confronted with the meaninglessness of violence is not a comfortable position for participants. Their accounts express solidarity to this effect, regardless of both gender and familiarity with the text. In their rationalisations of Mickey and Mallory's violence participants absolve them of all responsibility and in so doing dehumanise them. Hence, the process of rationalisation is dependent upon the context of the human condition; through their distancing mechanisms participants avoid dealing with the meaninglessness of the violence portrayed in *Natural Born Killers* because this evokes less difficulties than admitting that violence is borne out of being human.

Study 3: The Contextualisation of Film Violence has demonstrated the inherent complexities within the process of making sense of violence in popular film, a finding which was suggested in the two preceding studies. It has identified the roles played by

gender and context in the interpretation of film violence and has concluded that such violence can be rationalised if it is defined as essentially human. Additionally, it has confirmed that the major objective in participants' experiencing of film violence is to attribute meanings to it. The findings of this study, together with those of Studies 1 and 2, have successfully analysed a substantial amount of experiential accounts. It is therefore now possible to propose how violence is conceived and made meaningful, how it is experienced, and what is gained from experiencing violence vicariously through the medium of popular film.

Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Experiencing violence vicariously via the medium of popular film has been the topic of investigation in this research project. Previous empirical research and theoretical knowledge relevant to this inquiry was evaluated in Chapter 2 in order to locate this inquiry within the discipline of psychology. With this existing knowledge in mind a set of research questions were devised in order to open up an area of investigation which had not yet been subjected to in-depth psychological study. A series of three studies was designed to answer these questions in an empirical fashion and suitable methods of analysis were employed to interpret the findings. The research questions asked at the beginning of the thesis were:

- ♦ How do individuals conceive violence and what definitions do they employ?
- ♦ What meanings do individuals attribute to representations of violence in the visual media?
- ♦ What is the nature of experiencing violence vicariously via the medium of popular film?
- ♦ What do individuals gain from experiencing violence vicariously via the medium of popular film?

In this final chapter several issues concerning both the procedures and the findings of this project need to be discussed. Firstly, the findings of Studies 1, 2, and 3 will be summarised as a means of clarifying the knowledge which has been gained in response to the questions above. Secondly, these findings will be evaluated with reference to the existing literature. This will involve interpreting the results of the three studies in relation to the empirical research and theories included in Chapter 2.

The procedures involved in a research project are crucial to the understanding of its contribution to knowledge, because of this the third section of this chapter will review the methods of data collection and analysis implemented. This will be accomplished by testing the viability of the studies using the four tests proposed in Chapter 3. These are the credibility test, the level of transferability achieved, the dependability of the project, and its confirmability (Robson, 1993; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Additionally, this section

will reflect upon the chosen paradigm, psychology conceived as a human science, as introduced in Chapter 3, and will consider the implications of this decision with a special focus upon how it implicates the existing body of effects research.

As well as adding to previous knowledge the findings of any research project open up new avenues of investigation. Further, once a research project is complete it becomes clear that there are questions which have remained unanswered. Any such possibilities for future work and unanswered questions which have arisen out of this research will be discussed in the fourth part of this chapter.

Finally, the conclusion will clarify the significance of this project in terms of its contribution to the psychological understanding of experiencing film violence.

7.2 Research Findings

The design of this research project has a crucial influence on the nature of its findings. All three studies have made discoveries in their own right but the integration of these discoveries produces an intricate story of the experiencing of violence vicariously via the medium of popular film. The data of each study has uncovered the intrinsic complexity within the act of viewing representations of violence *on film* and the first two studies have confirmed that violence in real life is experienced as distinct from its mediated counterpart. However, as the project progressed from the basic exploration of Study 1 to the more focused aims of Studies 2 and 3, a number of factors were revealed to be crucial to the ways in which film violence is experienced and made meaningful.

The first study in this project, *Study 1: Experiencing Violence*, was extremely successful in fulfilling its aims; as an exploratory study its objective was to broach the question of experiencing violence vicariously in order to open up the arena for the subsequent studies. The data obtained in Study 1 revealed that violence is not always defined in the same way. Although common conceptions of violence have become established in the wider culture, such as that violence is a criminal and anti-social activity, it is an attack against the vulnerable to gain power, it is an act which results in physical injury on the part of the victim and so on, these are not the only possible ways of defining violence. Study 1 illustrated that some individuals believe that the definition of violence can be broadened to incorporate the act of watching sport, of using

offensive or aggressive language, and the act of viewing a violent film, thereby indicating the idiosyncratic manner in which violence is conceived.

This uniqueness was further demonstrated in the wide range of meanings which individuals attribute to their encounters with violence both via the visual media and directly in real life. Real life violence was described as more severe and more enduring than media violence, illustrated in the codes of endurance, injustice, isolation, pain, and trauma. Also the code of lack of comprehension reveals that participants often have difficulties in understanding the occurrence of violence in real life. Violence which is experienced receptively via the visual media, in contrast, was sometimes described in a positive light, shown in the codes of entertainment, enjoyment, and involved. Notably, the real life violence code of lack of comprehension is absent from participants' accounts of media violence. This shows that media violence is not so difficult to understand. Further, participants judged representations of violence by a set of criteria. The codes of context, rationalisation and reality reveal that viewers are able to justify the presence of media violence if it appears to be legitimate within the context of the film (or programme) or if it is portrayed realistically. Study 1 also found that imagination plays a large role in individuals' interpretations of representations of violence. In the code of bloody violence participants recounted how they would conjure up images in their minds which were far more bloody and gruesome than those portrayed on the screen. Additionally, the codes of accustomisation, children, desensitisation, media and society, and violence in society illustrate that participants are aware of both the controversy which surrounds media violence and the issues that have featured greatly in previous psychological research.

The findings of Study 1 were confirmed and expanded upon in *Study 2: Meanings of Violence*. The codes of continuum of real life and continuum of film violence revealed many divergent ways in which violence is conceived. The sub codes of real life violence confirm that violence constitutes menacing, fearful and violating events as well as acts involving an attack against an individual, a fight between a number of people, and a mugging for example. Film violence also is distinguished according to whether it is frightening, menacing, shocking, bloody and graphic. However, there are several positive sub codes within the continuum of film violence which were not used to define real life violence. For instance, some film violence is described as black comedy, fascinating, believable and informative.

These differences between real life and film violence continue to be apparent within participants' narrative description of their experiences. The codes of powerlessness, hard to cope with, victimised through violence, upsetting, and trauma reveal the intensity of violence in real life. Again, as in Study 1, the codes of anger, disbelief, frustrating, meaningless violence, shock, and unprepared demonstrate the struggle which individuals experience when faced with the task of making sense of violence in real life. The film violence code of considered appreciation, on the other hand, reveals that, despite its sometimes sickening and disturbing appearance, film violence can be made meaningful by participants and was on occasions enjoyable, as illustrated in the codes of humour, involving and enjoyment. In fact, the most significant finding of this second study concerns individuals' rationalisations of violence, both in real life and via the visual media.

The accounts of real life violence were laden with participants' rationalising processes; the code of violence rationalised through context revealed that violence in real life was attributed to society, to alcohol and to a lack of affection during childhood, whilst those who recounted their own violent behaviour justified it as being an attempt at retribution, an act of stupidity, or of ignorance, as shown in the *perpetrators' justification code*. Witnesses and victims of violence also felt obliged to explain the ways in which they responded to violence, in the code of rationalisation of response. As in the previous study, media violence was also rationalised through a variety of mechanisms, although the nature of these mechanisms was now identified with more clarity. The code of violence rationalised through narrative revealed that participants were willing to endure scenes of gory and disturbing violence provided that they were sufficiently involved in and understood the story they were being told. This finding confirmed that the ways in which film violence is made meaningful is intricately linked to how the narrative of the film is experienced and understood. Additionally, the code of violence rationalised through context revealed the nature of the contextual factors that are at work in individuals' meaning-making processes. The sub code of fiction versus non-fiction confirms that the genre of the film as well as the nature of its narrative influence the ways in which participants make sense of film violence. Similarly, the sub codes of identification with characters and character development reveal that perceptions of the characters within a film can affect how film violence is experienced. Also, the sub code of realistic violence confirms that the degree of realism within representations of violence is crucial to the meanings imposed upon film violence.

The codes of references to popular and scientific discourses also reveal that participants frequently refer to discourses of media violence which have become established in contemporary culture when making sense of film violence. This confirms that existing ideologies play an active role in individuals' interpretations of media violence. Similarly, the personal histories of individuals was found to be a significant factor in the ways in which violence, particularly in real life, is approached. The real life violence codes of experience informs response and professional response illustrate that previous encounters with violence in a professional environment, for example as a police officer, were found to be influential in the ways of dealing with violence. Individuals with this kind of prior experience were more pragmatic in the event of violence and had acquired coping strategies to lessen the pain which is evoked by violence.

Study 2 concluded that the idiosyncrasies within the continuums of violence and the references to culturally shared discourses of media violence are combined to make up individuals' experiencing of violence vicariously through the channel of popular film. In other words, the personal and cultural realms are united to form unique experiential accounts of film violence.

The objective of *Study 3: The Contextualisation of Film Violence* was to develop the findings of the intermediary study by investigating the experiences of divergent groups of participants. *Natural Born Killers* was selected as the key text to be focused upon in this study in order to elicit discussions about a concrete experience of film violence. The contextual factors of genre, narrative, the characters, and the manner in which violence is portrayed, were again revealed to be significant to individuals' interpretations of film violence. In addition, the gender of viewers and their familiarity with the key text were found to be influential in the process of making sense of that text.

The males who participated in Study 3 focused upon the physicality of the representations of violence in their evaluations of *Natural Born Killers* and in their processes of attributing meanings to the events and characters in the film. For the female participants the psychological aspects of the violence, both in terms of its portrayal and their experiencing of it, were considered to be most significant. They attached more gravity to the threat of violence and to the history of the characters

within the story than to the visual display of violent actions. Moreover, the females described their experience of these menacing forms of violence as disturbing.

The degree of familiarity with the text manifested itself in the depth of participants' accounts; those who were familiar with the entire film were able to offer a more comprehensive interpretation of the representations of violence in it than those who lacked this context. However, in their desire to understand, those who were unfamiliar with the text sometimes made false assumptions in order to narrativise the otherwise meaningless violence. It is from this finding that a crucial discovery was made. Those who were familiar with the text displayed difficulties, similar to those revealed previously in connection with real life violence, in the process of attributing meanings to the violence witnessed. This stresses that the meaning-making process is not always straightforward, even when contextual knowledge is available. However, these participants were able to attribute meanings to the violence with reference to its narrative context. Those who lacked contextual knowledge also encountered difficulties when making sense of the violence in the clips, but without being able to refer to the narrative of the film the process of meaning-making proved more problematic. Nevertheless, these participants did not cease in their attempts to understand the violence portrayed. Hence, the discourse revealed that viewers of violent film are constantly striving for the meanings within it, that is, their primary concern is to attribute meanings to the images with which they are confronted.

In their lengthy discussions about the origin of the violence in the film, participants confirmed that being able to rationalise its occurrence is an equally essential contributor to making sense of violence. Several mechanisms were identified in the codes of rationalisation of violence and human condition by which violence can be legitimated. The code of rationalisations of violence reveals that the life histories of the leading characters were crucial in participants' rationalisations of violence because they were both subjected to abuse as children. The implication of this was that the violence committed by Mickey and Mallory was attributed to their abuse, to the presence of violence in their childhood, and to the general degradation of society rather than to them as social actors. In doing this, participants relinquished Mickey and Mallory of all responsibility; the violence was no longer identified as a voluntary activity but as something outside of the characters' control. Further, the code of human condition illustrates that participants distanced themselves from the leading characters

by attributing their violence to an animal instinct. Rather than confronting the possibility that Mickey and Mallory's violence is human in origin, and in turn that all human beings are potentially capable of similar atrocities, this dissociation device had the effect of dehumanising the violence. Through this detachment mechanism it became possible to postpone the process of meaning-making by rejecting the violence as subhuman. The discomfort of not being able to attach meanings to the violence in this film is matched to the anxiety felt in the admission that all human beings are capable of violence. Participants resolved this dilemma by denying the humanness of the violence in *Natural Born Killers* in order to explicate it in a manner which is less painful.

The codes of breakdown of typical film formula and symbolism and message reveal that members of the public are by no means ignorant of the medium they are consuming. As in previous studies, participants demonstrate an awareness of the methods used by film makers to accentuate certain dramatic moments within the film's narrative. For instance, the code of breakdown in typical film formula includes participants' discussions about the effect created by the use of a particular genre of music, in this case the introduction of opera-like music to accompany a somewhat unprovoked killing spree in *Scene 1: The Diner*. Also participants were aware of the unconventional portrayal of men and women in *Natural Born Killers* and the absence of the stereotypical 'good guy vs. bad guy' formula adopted in many Hollywood films. Participants did not ignore or reject these unusual aspects of *Natural Born Killers* but, as the code of symbolism and message reveals, interpreted them as indicative of some grand message concerning the state of violence in contemporary culture.

The codes of media violence, effects discourse, comparison to real life and cultural differences similarly stress the extent of participants' knowledge about the film industry, the media generally, and the nuances of American and British culture. The discussions in these codes include participants' assessment of film violence within the context of real life violent atrocities. They are aware of the sensationalism involved the media's coverage of events such as the shootings in Denver, 1999 and in Dunblane, 1996. Further, they demonstrate their knowledge concerning society's frequent scape-goating of media violence as a cause of violence in real life. Additionally, embarked upon their own study of the implications of culture in their interpretations of *Natural Born Killers*. This demonstrates their ability not only to grasp complex issues that are raised by the film, but also to address these in an abstract way.

However, of primary import in this project is the code of meaning-making which evolved from the data in Study 3. Several mechanisms were identified as effectual in participants' meaning-making processes. Firstly, as in the previous study, narrative is considered to be crucial. This is revealed through the disjointed nature of the narrative of *Natural Born Killers*. For instance, the violence in the first clip (*Scene 1: The Diner*) is shocking and difficult to comprehend because the narrative has not yet properly been introduced and contextual information is lacking. Similarly, the contradictions within the story, for example the passionate love which Mickey and Mallory share and the dispassionate manner in which they kill people, render the process of attributing meanings to *Natural Born Killers* extremely problematic. Therefore, it is in the narrative structure of this film that the significance of being able to narrativise events is revealed.

In summary, the research questions posed in Chapter 1 have been successfully answered. The findings of this research have revealed that experiencing violence vicariously is a challenging activity that is made up of intricate interpretative processes. Experiences of film violence range from disturbing and shocking, bloody and gruesome, to entertaining and enjoyable, amusing and frivolous. Moreover, the meanings attributed to representations of violence are dependent upon the contexts in which they are experienced. The context is plural because it has been found to be at work on several levels; these include the characteristics of the film, the personal history and gender of the viewer, the justifiability of the violence, and the fact that representations of violence occur in, largely fictional, mediated dramatisations as opposed to real life events of a person's life. Hence, experiencing violence vicariously through film offers the viewer an opportunity to experience the extremes of emotion through a safe channel and it enables the viewer to confront aspects of the human condition which are taboo in contemporary Western culture.

7.3 Contributions to Existing Knowledge

Having made the findings of this research clear, it is now necessary to establish how they have contributed to previous psychological knowledge. This will be achieved by returning to the empirical and theoretical research outlined in Chapter 2. Many past studies investigated television violence and paid particular attention to child audiences, compared to the focus in this project upon film violence and its intended audience, i.e. adults. Additionally, an overwhelming proportion of previous studies have been effects studies, i.e. they have aimed to examine the support for the hypothesis that exposure

to media violence leads to increased violence in real life. Although this research project is neither an effects study nor a study of children's responses to television violence, its findings do have significant implications for past and future media violence research.

The most striking addition to existing knowledge made by this project concerns the complexity that is inherent within the concept of media violence. The early debate in psychological inquiry about whether it is the quantity of violent scenes in the visual media or the quality of them which is most significant has been resolved. Many researchers conducted surveys of media violence (e.g. Smyth, 1954; Head, 1954; Dale, 1933) and concluded that there was a worrying number of violent acts broadcast on television. This view has been perpetuated by incessant attempts of effects researchers to attribute violence in society to the exposure to violent imagery in the media. The intensity with which this argument has been proposed has led to an almost unquestioning acceptance of it within contemporary culture. This is demonstrated by the persistence of mythologies of media violence which thrive upon discourses of harm, imitation, desensitisation and dumbing down. However, this project has confirmed beyond doubt that such conceptualisations of media violence are ill-founded and unsubstantiated. The experiential accounts analysed in this study have found that the quality, or meanings, which are imposed upon representations of violence by viewers override their quantity. This empirical evidence supports the early argument of Klapper (1960) and Himmelweit, Oppenheim and Vince (1958), for instance, who also professed that the quantity of representations of violence is insignificant in the investigation of media violence, rather it is the manner in which they are interpreted which is vital.

Similarly, the cultivation theory devised by George Gerbner, within the discipline of mass communications, has been found to be misguided in its use of a singular definition of violence (e.g. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli, 1980: 11) to assess the amount of violence which is broadcast on American television (Signorielli, Gross and Morgan, 1982). The continuums of violence obtained from the current research testify to the hollowness of such a definition through the discovery of the extensive range of meanings which are applied to the concept of violence in varying circumstances. This finding supports arguments made decades ago, which until now have been ignored. Klapper (1960) expressed concern about the limitations of adopting

a fixed definition due to the variety of violent events that are portrayed in the visual media. Moreover, the more recent work of Morrison, MacGregor, Svennevig and Firmstone (1999), Sander (1997) and Gunter (1985) has provided empirical evidence of the diverse ways in which individuals perceive violent media content. Morrison et al (1999) discovered that whether or not scenes of violence can be justified and how realistic they are affects viewers' interpretations of them. Similarly, Sander (1997) and Gunter (1985) both emphasised that the amount of suffering depicted in the victim's behaviour influences perceptions of violence. This project has added significantly to these works by establishing additional mechanisms which are at work in the processes of making sense of film violence. For instance, the code of context in Study 1, the codes of violence rationalised through narrative and violence rationalised through context in Study 2, and the codes of human condition and rationalisations of violence in Study 3 each reveal that the realism of the images, the context in which violence is portrayed, and the believability of representations of violence are crucial in individuals' interpretations of film violence.

Discovering that there are multiple possible meanings that can be attributed to violent imagery is a crucial development made by this project. As stated above, the longstanding tradition in psychology has been to propose a fixed definition of violence (e.g. Harris, 1999; Baron and Byrne, 1994) that can then be applied to any violent experience or behavioural response to images of violence on screen. The findings of this research reveal that individuals conceive violence in many different ways, not only in terms of representations of violence in the visual media but also in terms of violent behaviour in real life. The significance of these results is revealed when they are compared to the conclusion made by Morrison et al (1999), for instance. Despite their open-minded approach to the subject and their admirable commitment to discovering how viewers perceive violence as opposed to psychologists, Morrison et al (1999) conclude by offering a single definition of violence. Many issues are raised in their research, for example, the ways in which women focus upon the psychological aspects of violence in films and the effect of previous experience of violence in real life upon individuals' interpretations of violence in film (Morrison et al, 1999). Nevertheless, these findings are ignored by their proposed definition of violence which states that whether or not a film is considered to be violent is dependent upon its perceived justifiability and/or realism. Although these criteria are crucial to the meaning-making process, as

confirmed by this research, the concept of violence cannot be reduced to a homogeneous entity.

The evidence of the complexities involved in the perception of violence in this research, both in real life and via film, also fundamentally questions the appropriateness of the effects hypothesis: the effects hypothesis proposes that exposure to media violence will increase violent conduct in real life. However, the experiential accounts in this project have revealed that violence in real life is experienced as distinct from that encountered receptively via the visual media. This distinction alone casts doubt over the possibility of a causal link between the two forms of violence. Viewers of violent material are also aware of the boundaries that exist between experiencing violence vicariously, wishing to behave violently, and actually behaving in a destructive manner, thereby supporting the argument proposed by Cumberbatch (1989). The ways in which participants in this study discussed their experiences of violence demonstrate an ability to divide the fantasy of film and the reality of actual violent events. This finding rejects the simplistic assumption made as a result of laboratory experiments, such as those completed by Bandura, Ross and Ross (1963a, 1963b, 1961), that mediated violence will influence viewers to imitate what they have seen on screen. Furthermore, participants in this study are aware of the presence of the effects discourse in contemporary society and the implications it has on individuals' thinking about the issues raised by media violence. In addition, participants' ability to partake in an intelligent and reasoned discussion about the viability of the effects hypothesis reveals in itself that they are by no means passive in their consumption of media violence and are not likely therefore to blindly imitate the behaviours viewed. On the contrary, participants have shown a high degree of knowledge both about the film industry and the tendency of the press and politicians to condemn it as an instigator of crimes such as the murder of James Bulger.

The discovery that media violence, and indeed violence in real life, is not a homogeneous concept has exposed limitations of a comparable nature in both experimental field studies (e.g. Leyens, Camino, Parke and Berkowitz, 1975; Parke, Berkowitz, Leyens, West and Sebastian, 1977; Feshbach and Singer, 1971) and correlation studies (e.g. Belson, 1978; McIntyre and Teevan, 1972; Schramm, Lyle and Parker, 1961). As stated previously, the current study is not an effects study, however, its findings have severe implications for the effects research of the past. There are

fundamental flaws in the manner in which these projects have defined both 'media violence' and 'violent behaviour'. This research has shown that conceptualisations of violence are made up of an idiosyncratic blend of both internal interpretative processes and externally shared discourses of media violence. The implication of this is that individuals' definitions of violence are essentially subjective. This finding highlights a serious problem inherent in both experimental field studies and correlation studies. It has been the case that in these projects 'media violence' and 'violent behaviour' has been measured by researchers, participants' parents, teachers, peers, or the participants themselves. This would not pose a problem if the subjectivity of these methods of measurement was acknowledged. However, these studies have assumed that all collaborators involved in this crucial role of identifying 'violent media' and 'violent behaviour' are employing an identical, fixed definition of violence. This project has shown that such objectivity is impossible and therefore exposes the rocky foundations upon which experimental field studies and correlation studies are built.

Berkowitz and Rawlings' (1963) experimental study, in spite of its overall conclusion in favour of the effects hypothesis, highlighted the significance of whether or not representations of violence are conceived as justified by viewers. They concluded that the aggression levels of viewers are increased only under certain conditions, one of which was that the violence witnessed must be considered as justified. The differences between that piece of research and this are vast; instead of attributing the ability to rationalise scenes of violence to increased aggressive behaviour, this project has revealed that it helps individuals to make sense of film violence. Nevertheless, the fact that both have identified justification as crucial to the experiencing of media violence is encouraging.

The majority of inquiries conducted by mass communications researchers have been similarly optimistic. Uses and gratifications research attempted to establish the needs and motives of media consumers before considering the effects which may ensue due to exposure to the media (e.g. Rubin, 1986). However, the confusion within the discipline prevented the proposal of a lucid theory. This project has been able to address issues of motive in a more grounded fashion by exploring what violent media mean to its viewers. Some participants told that they watch film to escape the routine of everyday life and to relax, while others expressed an interest in the life styles of film

characters who are violent because they are at war, a member of the Mafia, a glamorous criminal or a maniacal killer, for instance.

Mass communications researchers often rebelled against the dominant effects discourse and as a result have approached media violence in a more positive manner. Elliott's (1974) argument that the consumption of media productions should be viewed as a beneficial process of self-development has been taken on board in this research. This project has inquired about what is gained by experiencing violence vicariously and it has revealed that several opportunities are created through this activity, such as being able to live out experiences in fantasy which would ordinarily be unrealisable in the day-to-day course of life. This is illustrated in the codes which evolved from the data in Study 2, including the sub codes of fascinating violence and fantasy in the continuum of film violence, the popular discourse of fascination with violence, and the scientific discourses of pressure valve and function of film.

These findings also support the studies of Krcmar and Greene (1999) and Bryant and Zillmann (1984). Firstly, Bryant and Zillmann (1984) discovered that individuals' consumption of the media is mood-specific. For instance, if a person feels upset then it is likely that s/he will choose the genre of comedy in order to achieve a positive experience. However, in their later work, Zillmann and Bryant (1994) propose that this kind of interpretation of individuals' media choice may be too simplistic; a person who is upset is just as likely to watch a 'weepy' film or programme, thereby feeding their depressed state of mind. Secondly, Krcmar and Greene's (1999) study opposes the common assumption that it is adolescents who seek thrill and adventure, are disinhibited, or who are easily bored that choose violent media over different genres. In fact, in their conclusion, Krcmar and Greene (1999) suggest that the categorisation of high sensation seekers (Zuckerman, 1994) is too simplistic to predict the consumption patterns of violent media. This thesis not only supports the finding that individuals' choice of media output is too complex to be reduced to either mood or personality type, it also goes beyond it. The analyses in this project introduce the variables of past experience of violence, both in real life and in film, viewers' gender, and expectations created via film advertising campaigns as effective in participants' choices of film or television programme.

Another example of the open-mindedness of mass communications studies is found in the audience research conducted by Barker and Brooks (1998), Hill (1997) and Schlesinger (Schlesinger, Hayes, Boyle, Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Schlesinger, Dobash, Dobash and Weaver, 1992). The two projects that Schlesinger was involved in investigated the differences in interpretations of television violence according to gender. They found that women responded to violent media in diverse ways, perceiving it as a recreation of a painful experience, a feared event, or a distant possibility (Schlesinger et al, 1992). These findings illustrate that viewers of violent media should not be treated as a single entity, as they have been in the past, because it overlooks the fact that individuals interpret the media differently. Further proposing the significance of individual differences, the males in Schlesinger et al's (1998) second study revealed an ability to rationalise media violence more effectively than women by distancing themselves from the psychological implications of violence. The findings of Study 3 support these conclusions because they too have revealed that female participants stress the psychology of representations of violence in their meaning-making processes, while the males focused upon the physicality of the images portrayed. Additionally, the codes of individual approach to film, professional response and experience informs response in Study 2 further develop the significance of subjectivities within individuals' experiencing of violence. These codes illustrate that it is not only the viewers' gender but also the gender of characters in the particular film who are behaving violently which influence the meaning-making process.

Hill's (1997) audience research can be described as a 're-visiting' to media violence in much the same way as this project. Her aim was to reveal what violent film means to viewers and as a result she discovered that several factors are vital to their interpretative processes. Hill found that viewers are aware of the promotion strategies employed in the film industry and of their ability to create certain expectations. The conclusion that these expectations are influential in viewers' evaluations of film is supported in several of the codes which emerged in this project. For instance, the codes of breakdown of typical film formula, comparison to other films, and effects discourse in Study 3 as well as the codes of reference to popular and scientific discourses in Study 2 support and develop Hill's notion of the aware viewer. These codes confirm that viewers of violent film are not only knowledgeable about the film industry but that they have a good grasp of the implications it has on the wider culture, in terms of the dominant ideologies which influence common conceptions of media

violence, such as, that exposure to film violence increases the likelihood of violence in society and that it desensitises individuals to violence. Barker and Brooks' (1998) study of the audiences of *Judge Dredd* also confirms the discovery that viewers of violent film are aware of the cultural discourses concerning the consequences of the availability of this medium.

Similarly, Hill's (1997) finding that the film genre plays an active role has been both confirmed and developed in this study. The context code in Study 1, the codes of violence rationalised through context and violence rationalised through narrative in Study 2, and the codes of comparison to other films and impression of the film in Study 3 each have implications for the significance of genre in viewers' experiencing of film violence. The findings of this project have revealed that it is not only the film's genre which plays an active role in individuals' interpretations of violent film but also whether the representations of violence can be justified, whether viewers can identify with the characters in the film, and whether the narrative of the film is understood, for instance, are intrinsically linked to the meaning-making process.

This project has also supported the identification of expectation and anticipation as influential in the activity of watching violent film (Barker and Brooks, 1998; Hill, 1997). In terms of anticipation, participants spoke of conjuring up scenes in their imagination which are more gruesome than those depicted on screen, revealed in the code of bloody violence in Study 1. Additionally, anticipation has been found to be effectual when individuals are faced with violence in real life, as shown in the code of anticipation versus actuality in Study 2. This finding underlines the fundamental significance of viewers' idiosyncratic perceptual processes within the act of attributing meanings to their experiences of violence. Similarly, Barker and Brooks' (1998) discovery that a person's expectations about the quality and nature of a film can affect the evaluation of the film as a whole has been confirmed, in fact, this project has taken it further. As shown in the codes of breakdown of typical film formula and impression of the film in Study 3, participants were aware of the fact that *Natural Born Killers* was a controversially violent film before it was released due to commentaries in the popular press. As a result, participants' assessments of the violence portrayed in the film were framed within this predetermined conception that it was the most violent, most shocking, most controversial film made to date.

In short, the codes which have emerged in this project have further elaborated upon the findings of Schlesinger et al (1999), Barker and Brooks (1998), Hill (1997), and Schlesinger et al (1992) which stressed the diversity both of the violence portrayed in film and the audiences that choose to experience it. A crucial difference between this inquiry and recent mass communications studies, however, is that individuals' experiencing of film violence has been investigated in relation to existing psychological theories of violence and aggression. There has been little attempt by audience researchers to theorise the discoveries made. Although authors such as Morrison et al (1999) and Hill (1997) declare quite frankly that theory is not their concern, it remains the case that their findings require psychological explanation. What is the use of acquiring knowledge about individuals' conceptions and experiences of film violence if it is not then applied to past and present theories of violence? If scientific knowledge is to grow in its understanding of the phenomenon of violent film, it must address the deeper issues of why violent film is so successful and what function it fulfils. The discovery that gender, justification, realism, expectations and anticipation each influence the experiencing of violence vicariously, needs further attention in order to reveal what this means in terms of cinema-going as a component of contemporary Western culture. This project therefore represents a significant theoretical advancement upon these previous studies because it has attempted to explore some of these complex questions.

Several arguments introduced in the psychological theories evaluated in Chapter 2 have been supported in different ways by the findings of this research. The traditional theories of instinctivism (e.g. Lorenz, 1966; Hinde, 1960) and behaviourism (e.g. Skinner, 1961, 1972; Buss, 1961) both avoid the issue of responsibility in human violence by reducing it to an innate aggressive drive or the influence of a depraved society, respectively. Psychology continued to deny the contribution played by human choice in violent conduct through its development of the frustration-aggression hypothesis (Dollard, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears, 1939) and the social learning theory (Berkowitz, 1989; Bandura, 1973), for example, which both persist in the attempt to locate an external cause of violence. Through these theories psychology has expelled violence from the human realm and this project has obtained empirical evidence of this same distancing mechanism in action. Rather than admit the humanness of violence participants and psychologists alike have attempted to rationalise the occurrence of violence through attributing it to factors beyond the control of the violent actor. For

instance, the code of violence rationalised through context in Study 2 and the codes of rationalisations of violence and the human condition in Study 3 have shown that the violence of both film characters and those involved in real life events has been ascribed to a high level of violence in society, a decline in moral values, a lack of parental affection, and an animal instinct, rather than to the choices made by those behaving violently.

It has been proposed that such a relinquishing of responsibility regarding violence is due to a deep seated fear of the capabilities of humankind (Fromm, 1973). Freud's (1920) theory of the pleasure principle, and its corresponding reality principle, proposed that individuals may on occasion desire to behave destructively and risk freedom, love and even life, in the lustful pursuit of pleasure. As Fromm (1973) recounts, this notion of wanton aggression was received with trepidation during Freud's time and the findings of this research have shown that this fear has survived the intervening decades. This finding is linked to the detachment mechanism described above because participants have demonstrated a preference to define violence as subhuman rather than to face up to the possibility that such violence may be human in origin.

Additionally, the revelation in this study that film violence is sometimes enjoyed and experienced as amusing or satisfying upholds May's (1972) proposal of the 'ecstasy' of violence. May speaks of the aesthetic Gestalt which is achieved in scenes where violence brings relief to the audience. This occurs when the drama requires violence for it to be complete, an eventuality which has been exposed in the rationalisations of violence in this project. Further, May's suggestion that viewers are confronted with their own mortality when watching dramatisations of violence is illustrated through participants' reluctance to acknowledge the humanness of violence.

The typologies of violence suggested by both May (1972) and Fromm (1973) are also relevant to the findings of this research. However, rather than establishing empirical evidence of May's destructive violence or Fromm's malignant aggression, for example, this project has further confirmed their proposals that violence has a compound structure. The struggle which is evident in participants' attempts to impose meanings upon the violence they have experienced is accounted for in a sense by the complex set of definitions suggested by these humanistic-existential theories. Both the participants in this study and these psychologists have illustrated that defining violence

is problematic; May and Fromm have demonstrated this in their wide ranging conceptualisations of violence and the participants have done so through the difficulties experienced in attaching meanings to violence. Further, this finding supports Frankl's (1985, 1978, 1974) writings about the difficulties encountered when attempting to make sense of traumatic life experiences.

Nevertheless, in spite of the obstacles faced in their efforts to understand violence, participants have demonstrated that their ultimate goal when watching film violence is to attribute meanings to their experiences. The codes of meaningless violence and violence rationalised through narrative in Study 2 illustrate that attributing meanings to events is crucial if an intolerable experience of violence is to be rationalised or made less painful. Further, the in-depth analysis of participants with and without the full experiential context of *Natural Born Killers* in Study 3 confirms that when confronted with violence the priority is to make sense of it. These findings support Spinelli's argument about the centrality of meaning in human experience:

"As human beings, we attempt to make sense of all our experiences.
Through our mental acts, we strive to impose meaning upon the world."

(Spinelli, 1989: 1)

This finding supports the phenomenological theory that individuals interact with the world and that through this interaction meaning is created (Pollio, Henley and Thompson, 1997; Valle, King and Halling, 1989; Giorgi, 1970; Heidegger, 1962).

In addition, participants' use of narratives within their meaning-making and rationalisation processes supports Bruner's "folk human science" (1990: 67). Bruner (1990) proposes that human beings are endowed with the ability to negotiate and renegotiate meanings through the construction and telling of narratives. Moreover, Bruner argues that this narrative gift enables individuals to make comprehensible those life events which are in conflict with the ordinariness of the social world. This is achieved through invoking mitigating circumstances that can account for the divergent interpretations of an event, a film, or an encounter with violence, for instance (Bruner, 1990). Thus, a once meaningless event can be explicated, in spite of whether it becomes less disturbing as a result, if it is at least comprehensible. The findings of this project, particularly in Study 3, have provided empirical evidence of this mitigating

mechanism in action. Participants distanced themselves from the *Natural Born Killers* characters of Mickey and Mallory through attributing their violence to an animal instinct or a depraved society, as shown in the codes of human condition and rationalisations of violence. This reflects the ability to create mitigating circumstances in order to make sense of an experience. Hence, as in life generally, the primary goal when experiencing film violence is to make sense of it.

In short, this study has overcome the limitations of previous psychological research by rejecting the predetermined assumptions of effects research in favour of an open-ended inquiry, comparable to the approaches adopted by recent mass communications research. Crucially, it has been able to further develop the understanding of film violence through its consultations with existing psychological theories of violence. It is the closed attitudes of prior research which have restricted the progress made; the exploratory nature of this project, its open-minded reading of experiential accounts, and its interpretation of the data in terms of existing theories have rendered it successful as a valid addition to knowledge. The next section will discuss in more detail the paradigm within which this research is located and the methodological decisions which have guided it from beginning to end.

7.4 A Critical Evaluation of this Research

The complete assessment of this research requires an in-depth evaluation of the methods employed and the philosophical framework within which it was conceived. This will be achieved by returning to the four tests of verification, proposed in Chapter 3, which have been adopted in this research project; these are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Robson, 1993; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). How this research has fared in each of these four tests will be discussed before moving on to a general appraisal of the insights it has to offer human scientific psychology. During this assessment, the significance of the four components of disciplined inquiry (Hiles, 1999; Braud and Anderson, 1998) discussed in Chapter 3, i.e. paradigm, strategies, methods, and analysis, will become clear. The decision-making processes involved in the design of this project, i.e. the selection of methods of data collection and analysis, are inseparable from the adoption of the paradigm of human scientific psychology and the commitment to an evolving and data-driven strategy. It is, therefore, within the context of human scientific psychology that the

methods and analyses of this research are to be judged through the use of the four verification tests.

Credibility

The credibility test is used to establish whether or not the research accurately identified and described what it proposed to do in the research questions. As the previous sections of this chapter have confirmed, this project has been successful in achieving the goals set out in Chapter 1. It has obtained empirical evidence concerning the nature of individuals' experiencing of violence vicariously through the channel of popular film and the analyses conducted have provided psychological interpretations of the meanings attributed to them.

This has been possible for a number of reasons which further illustrate the credibility of this research. The implications of adopting the assumptions of human scientific psychology, in terms of credibility, are two fold. First, the split of the natural and human sciences renders the investigation of the human subject distinct from that of phenomena in the natural world (Dilthey, 1958; Wundt, 1862); the focus on issues which are uniquely human demands the different technique of describing in order to understand, rather than determining causal laws in order to explain (Dilthey, 1958; James, 1890). Second, the acknowledgement of multiple realities within human experiencing and the rejection of the notion of objectivity within research per se necessitates the in-depth inquiry into individuals' being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962) in order to reveal the multiplicity of meanings embedded within situated lived experience (Kvale, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1988; Giorgi, 1994, 1970). These assumptions promote the use of open-ended research strategies in order to facilitate the disclosure of the intricacies within individuals' experiences of film violence. In turn, the discursive accounts of those who have experienced violence vicariously represent a valid form of data for a study which is committed to the paradigm of human scientific psychology. Consequently, the methods of semi-structured individual interviews and inquiry groups are considered to rate high on the credibility scale.

However, the credibility of the strategies adopted also requires verification before the methods themselves can be tested. As discussed in Chapter 3, the strategies adopted in this study are inspired to an extent by Grounded Theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in that it is the data gathered during the course of the project

which guides the path to be taken. This means that rather than attempting to support an existing theory, this research has used individuals' experiential accounts in order to learn something about individuals' conceptualisations and experiencing of film violence. Due to the priority which is given to the experiencers, i.e. those who have experienced film violence, this project has been able to reveal the complex nature of experiences of film violence and therefore has fulfilled the goals proposed in the research questions. As such the open-ended, evolving strategy implemented in this study has proved to be credible. Nevertheless, the credibility of this strategy rests largely upon the credibility of the methods employed, in this case individual interviews and inquiry groups. It is this dependent relationship which stresses the significance of all the decisions made when designing a human scientific research project.

Before moving on to the methods of individual interviews and inquiry groups, however, it is necessary to discuss the questionnaire method of data collection used in Study 1a. As the analyses of the questionnaire scripts revealed, the data obtained was of restricted depth. A copy of the questionnaire used is in Appendix 2.1 which shows that there is a limited amount of space in which participants can respond to the questions posed and that sometimes there is a set of predetermined answers from which to choose. This closed method of collecting data appears to be in direct conflict with a human scientific investigation which has argued its commitment to an evolving and open strategy and because of this it would ordinarily be avoided. However, its presence is justified in this case because it is used simply as a foot-in-the-door technique. As the design of Study 1a professed, this questionnaire study sought to achieve two basic aims: to begin the exploratory process of revealing the significant factors involved in both defining and experiencing violence and to solicit participants for a research interview which would be included in Study 1b. This being the context in which the questionnaire was applied, it is considered to be a credible method. As the findings of Study 1a reveal, it achieved its purpose of exposing a wide range of ways in which violence is defined and experienced, in spite of its simplicity, and it provided the participant sample for Study 1b. As an introductory tool a questionnaire worked well but as the sole source of data it would have resulted in a project lacking in depth that would have fallen short of its objectives. This is why the remainder of this research turned to semi-structured individual interviews and inquiry groups as the major methods of collecting data.

Reference to a quote included in the original discussion about interviews in Chapter 3 illustrates their unmistakable advantage:

"When carrying out an enquiry involving humans, why not take advantage of the fact that they can tell you things about themselves."

(Robson, 1993: 227)

In this light, the motivation behind the choice of interviewing appears to be straightforward; if experiencing film violence is the issue to be explored, why not ask people about their experiences of it. However, there are practical limitations in the implementation of interviews, be they of a one-to-one format or in the context of an inquiry group. First of all, difficulties may be encountered in terms of establishing a rapport with the participants. If a trusting relationship is not created within the interview situation, participants may simply not wish to share the details of their experiences (Evans, Hearn, Uhlemann and Ivey, 1984; Spradley, 1979). This could severely limit the accessibility and usefulness of the data. Secondly, due to the complexities inherent in the process of meaning-making (Bruner, 1990; Mishler, 1986), the researcher may misunderstand the participants' discourse. Similarly, the formulation of questions or interjections on the part of the researcher during the interview may bias the responses offered by participants (Breakwell, 1995; Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall, 1994; Burgess, 1984). Further, the situational context in which the interview takes place contributes to the construction of the interpersonal discourse (Burr, 1995). These can be serious problems in an interviewing scenario if the researcher is unaware of them. However, if these factors are understood to be an integral part of a speech act between two or more people (Mishler, 1986; Gumperz, 1982; Hymes, 1967), they can be managed to transform a potentially unpleasant or damaging encounter into an informative and stimulating one.

Research interviewing is incredibly demanding and requires diligent self-monitoring techniques from the researcher in order to bracket personal bias. Throughout the three studies in this project a great deal has been learnt concerning the importance of actively listening to participants. The role of the interviewer, or preferably the facilitator, is not so much asking a series of questions but paying close attention to the narratives which the participants are recounting and sometimes prompting them in order to glean supplementary information concerning the nature of experiencing film violence. This is

achieved through careful consideration both in the planning stages of creating an interview schedule and in formulating questions throughout the actual encounter. For the facilitator this means, in many cases, holding back when the usual pattern of a conversation would require a response or would benefit from the introduction of a personal opinion. In other words, instead of introducing subjective ideas into the research scenario when it feels natural to do so, a skilful facilitator empowers the participants to expand upon their own ideas and beliefs by not biasing them with his/her own. Therefore, priority is given to the participants' accounts by becoming an active listener, rather than a co-speaker, and by limiting the facilitator's speech to an appropriate minimum. Having said that, the act of speaking as little as possible may also have implications in terms of what the participant is willing to say. For example, in the case of a particularly sensitive issue, such as being violently attacked by a spouse or partner in the home, a participant may be encouraged to share more of the experience if the researcher was more active in offering opinions and comfort, as a close friend may in a similar situation. In addition, the fact that they are talking to a female research psychologist, who they may perceive as an expert in the field, will have consequences in terms of how participants will talk about their experiences of violence. These are unavoidable eventualities, but are issues that any researcher must be aware of in their analysis of discursive data.

As many of the researchers who write about interviewing state (e.g. Smith, 1995; Banister et al, 1994; Robson, 1993), their written advice should be treated simply as a guide rather than as *the ultimate method of interviewing*. In addition, the literature cannot be matched to the practical experience gained through conducting interviews first hand. However, once confidence and experience are accumulated, collecting data via interviewing is an invaluable research tool which will provide credible material. The credibility is assured because, assuming the interview schedule includes topics which are relevant to the research questions, the outcome will be a series of experiential accounts from those who watch films containing representations of violence who are, after all, well qualified to reveal the nature of their experiences.

Transferability

To reach an adequate level of transferability a research project should be written in such a way that a second researcher could replicate it if they so desired. However, rather than permitting a verbatim replication, which would be impossible in human

scientific psychology, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that sufficient information should be provided so that the techniques employed in one study can be transferred to another. An identical duplication of this research project would be impossible because the nature of the data is somewhat unique, in that, the discursive accounts obtained are specific to the research scenarios created in this instance. Nevertheless, it would be possible in principle for a second researcher to pose the same questions and to gather and analyse data using the same techniques. Differences may occur in the particular nature of the data because it would be gleaned from different discursive encounters. Similarly, differences may occur during the stages of analysis resulting in variations of the codes established, but similar conclusions may be drawn. The aim of producing a transferable report, therefore, is to present the procedures undertaken in detail so that they can be transferred to a second inquiry should someone want to conduct one. With a view to this aim, the methods of sampling, data collection, and analysis implemented in this project were discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Additionally, in the chapters dedicated to the three studies (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) a concerted effort was made to explain the procedures undertaken at each stage of the research process.

The participants in this research were selected in stages for each study using theoretical sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This means that only the initial sample for Study 1 was established a priori; the samples for Studies 2 and 3 were secured as and when they were required and the selection process was influenced greatly by the findings of the preceding study. The benefit of theoretical sampling in this project is that it permitted the second and third samples to be sought from different agencies which were chosen specifically to attract people with qualities relevant to the questions being posed. For instance, the findings of Study 1 revealed a wide range of experiences of film violence which led to the more focused approach in Study 2 of using a list of recent films to initiate the interview discussions. As a result, the local cinema was targeted as a means of contacting people who visited the cinema and who, therefore, were likely to have watched some of the films on the list. Likewise, in Study 3 a campaign was set up at a Student Hall of Residence in order to attract participants aged over eighteen and who would constitute the target audience for the key text, *Natural Born Killers*. In each of the study chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) the design section makes clear which agencies were used to solicit participants and the reasons for these choices are also stated. The inclusion of this information consequently renders this method of sampling transferable.

Nevertheless, there may be problems with bias within this method of theoretical sampling. As stated previously, people were targeted because they fell into a certain category which was appropriate to the nature of the study. Due to this, many other categories of people were excluded. For instance, in Study 2 individuals were approached at a cinema in order to ensure that they watched popular film. Another way to solicit participants would have been to also approach customers in a video hire shop, for instance. In this way, those individuals who choose to watch popular film at home instead of at the cinema would also have been included. Similarly, in Study 3 the sample was restricted to individuals aged between eighteen and thirty. Widening the sample to include people over the age of thirty may have had implications for the study as a whole. However, because of the detailed nature of the data acquired in human scientific research it is necessary to make choices which may in one sense be restrictive in order to enable an in-depth and fruitful analysis of the material that is obtained.

The methods of data collection are also subject to transferability therefore similar detail is required within the body of the thesis concerning the procedures involved. As stated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, the individual interviews utilised in Studies 1b and 2 and the inquiry groups in Study 3 were each guided by schedules which depicted the topics to be discussed. The design of these schedules was informed by the interpretations of the results which preceded them. This evolving design is made apparent both in Chapter 3, where the data-driven strategy adopted in this project is discussed, and in Chapters 4 and 5, where the findings which are to be used in the development of the next study are specified. On top of this the fact that the interviews and inquiry groups were audio-recorded and then transcribed according to the guidelines in Appendix 1.1 is made clear. Therefore, together with the added knowledge in the literature discussed in Chapter 3, the information included in this project regarding interviewing is, as far as possible, transferable to a second researcher. The degree of transferability is qualified in this way because, as discussed in the previous section of credibility, there is no prescriptive manner in which interviewing must proceed. Rather, the literature provides prospective interviewers with advice and practical examples which may help in the initial planning stages. The activity itself is something which can only develop with first hand experience.

More crucial in this project, in terms of transferability, is clarifying the method of analysis. As Chapter 3 disclosed, the analytic tool used is an adaptation of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999; Smith, Osborne, Jarman and de Lacey, 1999). The aim of the interpretative phenomenological analysis conducted in this study is the same as that stated in the literature: to access and make sense of the personal worlds of individuals through a process of interpretative activity (Smith, Jarman and Osborne, 1999). Similarly, the use of discursive accounts as data is a shared attribute of the analysis described by Smith, Jarman and Osborne (1999) and that adopted in this research. However, it is the details of the procedures involved in the analyses which differ. Smith, Jarman and Osborne (1999) propose two styles of interpretative phenomenological analysis, the idiographic case study and the exploration and theorising of shared themes. What is used here is considered to be a third variation.

The distinguishing features of this adaptation of interpretative phenomenological analysis are the organisation of the stages involved and the definitions of two crucial terms: 'theme' and 'code'. The procedure in this research comprised five stages which were implemented in succession and which developed in terms of the depth of interpretation gained. A clear description of these five stages is presented in Chapter 3, they are: Stage 1: Initial Reading and Note Making; Stage 2: Identifying Themes; Stage 3: Organising Themes; Stage 4: Coding; and Stage 5: Writing Up. The analysis sections in each of the study chapters constitutes the final procedure, Stage 5: Writing Up, and these written reports were structured according to what was revealed at each of the preceding four stages. Additionally, the details of how one stage developed into the next was included. For instance, in order to clarify how the codes in Stage 4 are established from the organisation of themes in Stage 3, the process of interpretation undertaken was described. This being the case, it is argued that sufficient information is provided about how the interpretative phenomenological analysis was conducted in this research to fulfil the requirements of a transferable method of analysis.

As the title of the analytic tool denotes, conducting interpretative phenomenological analysis entails a large degree of interpretative work. Researchers need to be aware of the implications of this in order for the analysis to meet the requirements of a rigorous method. Due to the structure imposed upon the analysis by the five stages which constitute this adaptation of interpretative phenomenological analysis, there is ample

opportunity for the researcher to reflect upon the decisions made. The first stage of Initial Reading and Note Making is the most crucial in this sense; if the researcher familiarises her/himself sufficiently with the data then the subsequent stages which involve making sense of the data are facilitated. Interpretative phenomenological analysis can be conceived as a two-pronged task: firstly what is said by participants about their experiences of violence must be exposed impartially; and secondly this discourse must be interpreted in order to answer the research questions posed. The second stage of Identifying Themes is in the business of simply revealing the nature of participants' accounts which is relatively straightforward if the researcher knows the data well. It is the third and fourth stages of Organising Themes and Coding which demand an attentive interpretative eye. Consequently, it is in these later stages where personal bias can become a problem. However, as the original description of this interpretative phenomenological analysis revealed (in Chapter 3), when embarking upon Stages 3 and 4 the temptation to draw subjective conclusions is kept in check by bearing in mind at all times the themes identified. Therefore when establishing codes personal biases can be identified and dealt with by returning to the thematic data to ensure that what is expressed in the code is present within the raw data. In short, personal bias can be bracketed through a constant process of reflection both during and in between each of the five stages of analysis.

Before discussing the dependability of this research, it is necessary to reiterate the distinction between the definitions of 'theme' and 'code' used in this analysis from the synonymous terms in Smith, Jarman and Osborne's (1999) account of interpretative phenomenological analysis. In order for a second researcher to implement this variation of interpretative phenomenological analysis it is crucial that s/he understands these terms. A 'theme' is made up of a collection of extracts taken directly from the corpus which include similar beliefs, ideas or opinions about the topic of investigation, in this case experiences of violence; a 'code' constitutes a collection of corpus extracts which represents the range of ways in which violence is experienced by participants. The difference between the themes and codes is therefore crucial to the transferability of this adaptation of interpretative phenomenological analysis. The themes are simply the result of an in-depth reading exercise to reveal exactly what is said by participants, whilst the development of codes requires a keen interpretative skill to identify within these themes that discourse which signifies both answers to the research questions and the particular concerns of the participants. Hence, it is the codes which are the

result of this interpretative phenomenological analysis, as opposed to the super-ordinate themes in Smith, Jarman and Osborne's (1999) account. Further, the codes established in this study are made up of both shared and unshared entities; they are shared in that they are available to everyone, but they are unshared because participants' use of them is subjective. In this sense, the codes which result from this research project represent empirical evidence of the phenomenology of film violence.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis is a new method of analysis and as such is a challenging prospect for any researcher. However, many publications, including Smith, Jarman and Osborne's (1999) *Doing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, Creswell's (1998) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, Smith, Harré and Van Langhove's (1995b) *Rethinking Methods In Psychology*, Banister et al's (1994) *Qualitative Methods in Psychology*, and Reason and Rowan's (1981) *Human Inquiry*, signify that the adoption of research methods which rely on the meaningful analysis of qualitative data is increasing in psychology. Due to their relatively recent introduction into the discipline however, together with their open-ended strategies and interpretative nature, they do not come with hard and fast rules of how they should be conducted. Rather, publications like those mentioned above often include practical examples of particular methods in action as a means of demonstrating the processes involved and the outcomes gained. This being the case, the detailed presentation of the methods adopted in this project in itself constitutes a useful guide to future researchers. In short, the methods of sampling, data collection, and analysis adopted in this project are adequately described during the course of the thesis to be transferable should a second researcher wish to replicate them.

Dependability

The dependability of a research project is linked to its credibility, as Robson (1993) states, dependability is necessary but not sufficient for a study to be credible. In other words, if the procedures implemented are appropriate, conducted without prejudice, and the researcher has a good command of them, that is, if they are dependable, it is more likely that the data gained will adequately reveal the nature of the intended subject, and therefore, will be credible. Many researchers propose that the level of dependability can be increased with triangulation, that is, the use of multiple sets of data and/or samples, a variety of data collecting and/or analytic methods, or the

collaboration of several researchers throughout the research process (Cresswell, 1998; Plummer, 1995; Banister et al, 1994; Robson, 1993).

This project has achieved a high level of dependability because the strategy to conduct a series of studies has enabled the collection of three sets of data using three distinct participant samples. Additionally, three methods of data collection have been employed, including questionnaires, individual interviews and inquiry groups, together with the use of multiple analytic tools, such as content analysis, discourse analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis. Even though a variety of research methods were employed the findings of the studies within this project corroborate each other. This in itself is an illustration of its dependability.

Further techniques of triangulation may have increased this dependability, for example, a second researcher may have been beneficial in the stages of both data collection and analysis and larger samples may have further guaranteed the credibility of the data. However, in a doctoral assignment such as this, a second researcher would be inappropriate and the size of samples used is a characteristic of human science research. A large amount of qualitative data was obtained in the three studies which is of a markedly detailed nature; an hour long interview or inquiry group provided on average ten to fifteen typed pages of discursive material, therefore in a sample of thirteen individuals or eight groups anything from 80 to 120 pages of data emerges. Moreover, it has been declared that the distinguishing feature of qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research, is that quantitative research deals with few variables and many cases, whereas qualitative research focuses upon a few cases and investigates many variables (Ragin, 1987). It is clear in the analyses of each study that the extensive data obtained throughout this project has revealed an abundance of variables which sufficiently contribute to the understanding of experiencing violence vicariously through the medium of film. In short, the open-ended, three phase strategy of this research and the triangulation procedures applied throughout assure its dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the final test proposed for human scientific research and it is used to determine the adequacy of procedures applied as well as the closeness of the findings to the data (Robson, 1993; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This is crucial in the assessment

of this research due to the interpretative processes involved throughout the research process. As discussed in Chapter 3 and in the previous credibility section, there are many contextual factors which contribute to the research scenarios created in the collection of data and perhaps more significantly in the analytic procedures implemented.

Firstly, the data obtained from interviews and inquiry groups is a discursive negotiation between participant(s) and the researcher, therefore constitutes a joint construction of meaning (Mishler, 1986). Due to this, caution must be taken and self-monitoring techniques must be upheld throughout the research scenario. For instance, during this project the researcher actively listened to participants' speech and formulated questions in an open-ended manner in order to reduce the possibility of bias and the occurrence of any misunderstandings. Secondly, as stated above, interpretative phenomenological analysis demands a certain amount of interpretative work and the fluidity of meanings can make this task problematic. However, similar methods of self-monitoring can be adopted to bracket personal bias. As discussed in the previous section of transferability, throughout the stages of analysis in this project there were many opportunities for reflection which facilitated the researcher's aim to adequately represent the data obtained whilst avoiding making any assumptions which may distort it. Further, the fact that this data is not translated into another form but is merely categorised into meaningful groups of speech, i.e. codes, illustrates the confirmability of these methods. In fact, it has been argued that this emphasis on participants' accounts of personal experience is what renders qualitative methods valid in psychological inquiry (Reason and Rowan, 1981).

Additionally, the data-driven strategy adopted in this project is a testament to its confirmability. Rather than embarking upon the research with predetermined notions of what film violence means to its viewers and therefore simply attempting to establish support for these ideas, this project has revealed issues which are significant to those who have experienced violence as they arose and was consequently able to develop them in subsequent studies. The implication of this is that the findings in each study evolve directly from the data and not a pre-established theory. In short, the priority in qualitative research methods to interpret and understand, as opposed to predicting and controlling, has enabled this project to advance with a high level of confirmability.

Throughout its design and implementation this project has respected the importance of reflexivity (Burr, 1995; Nicolson, 1995; Banister et al, 1994) which, it is proposed, is essential in gaining the status of confirmability. As Chapter 3 revealed, the design of this project was not taken lightly. Serious contemplation resulted in the selection of the paradigm of psychology conceived as a human science which provided the basic assumptions concerning the structure of knowledge, the nature of human experience, and the need to describe and understand human phenomena rather than to explain them by establishing causal laws of behaviour (Williams and May, 1996; Valentine, 1992; Giorgi, 1970). These beliefs led to a strategy which focused upon meanings and context which, in turn, influenced the decision to adopt interviews and inquiry groups as the primary methods of data collection. Likewise, because the aim of human scientific psychology is to understand human experiences, and due to the discursive nature of the data obtained, interpretative phenomenological analysis was selected as the method of analysis in this project. In short, there are significant reasons why this research has proceeded in the manner it has; reflection at each decision-making stage has facilitated the completion of a highly confirmable piece of research. Additionally, employing the tests of credibility, transferability, and dependability, demonstrates the reflexive procedures involved in this critical evaluation together with ameliorating its confirmability.

The Paradigm of Human Scientific Psychology

Selecting the paradigm of human scientific psychology has had positive ramifications throughout the entire process of this research project. The strategies adopted and the methods employed were inspired by the assumptions made within human scientific psychology and as the above discussions illustrate they have been verified through a series of tests.

Awareness of the paradigm within which research operates is crucial in understanding the procedures implemented and the results found. The assumptions of human scientific psychology promote the in-depth inquiry of meanings and context in order to describe and understand human experience. When embarking upon a research project within the paradigm of human scientific psychology it is necessary to remain open to unexpected occurrences. This allows participants to tell their stories honestly and the researcher to listen to them openly, which consequently enables the researcher to make interpretative conclusions directly from that data rather than from pre-established

theoretical beliefs. Hence, the procedures of human scientific research invariably involve encounters with human beings and the findings are often gained through negotiations between discursive data and the researcher's scientific interpretations.

Equally significant to the achievements of this project is the model of disciplined inquiry (Hiles, 1999; Braud and Anderson, 1998). Planning research is an arduous task which involves a series of difficult decisions. Psychology as a human science promotes a self-aware approach to research requiring careful consideration in order to create a project design which is appropriate to the questions posed. The model of disciplined inquiry provides an ideal framework within which this can be achieved. The planning process is divided into four categories: the identification of a paradigm; the decision of what strategies to employ; the selection of data collection methods; and the choice of analysis to be used. Chapter 3 revealed the outcome of each of these four stages and the previous sections in this chapter have discussed their implications in terms of both the procedures implemented and the results found.

As well as advocating an evolving research design and a reflexive analysis, however, the paradigm of psychology as a human science makes several assumptions which are fundamental to the understanding of experiences. For instance, as recounted in Chapter 3, the existence of multiple realities, the dialogic relationship between person and world, intentionality, and the life-world, are fundamental to the structure of knowledge, the nature of human experience, and the conceptualisation of the human subject (Pollio et al, 1997; Polkinghorne, 1983; Giorgi, 1970; Heidegger, 1962). These assumptions not only manifest themselves in the practice of research, as demonstrated above, but they also play a significant role in the interpretation of the findings. It is proposed that the results of the three studies conducted in this project provide support for these underlying philosophies of psychology conceived as a human science.

The major finding in this project concerns the intricacy in the ways in which individuals make sense of their experiences of violence. It has been revealed that several contextual factors are crucial in these meaning-making processes and that both personal and cultural discourses are used in the construction of experiential accounts. These results support several of the assumptions made by human scientific psychologists. Firstly, the notion of intentionality, which has been borrowed from phenomenology, states that human beings are not simply conscious but that they are

conscious of something (Crane, 1995; Kockelmanns, 1966). Hence, experiences are not solely derived from the human subject but they are co-constituted by the world in which the subject lives (Pollio et al, 1997; Giorgi, 1995; Valle et al, 1989). Rather than being wholly determined by either internal or external factors, a dialectic relationship exists between the two and it is assumed in human scientific psychology that through this constant interaction human experience is created (Valle et al, 1989; Reason and Rowan, 1981; Fromm, 1964). The findings of this research provide empirical evidence of this dialectic relationship. Participants' reference to popular and scientific discourses and their consultations with the contexts in which violence is encountered are fused with the emotions felt, their response to the violence, and their references to previous experiences of violence. Through the interaction of these components idiosyncratic narratives of violence are created. Therefore it is the idiosyncratic mix of both shared and unshared aspects of human experiences which constitute the phenomenology of violence.

Similarly, evidence supporting the significance of the life-world has been found in this project. The life-world is a human scientific construct which denotes the world which humans inhabit. It is not a fixed entity however, as it is made up of the cultural practices, feelings, values and beliefs that are characteristic of the particular culture being investigated; it is through these culture specific circumstances that meanings of everyday life are constituted (Kögler, 1995). Consequently, the finding that the meanings individuals attribute to violence are dependant upon the contexts in which it is experienced provides an illustration of the life-world in action. Further, Heidegger's (1962) notion of being-in-the-world stresses the situatedness of human experiences; they cannot be investigated in isolation but only within the bounds of human existence. The implication of this is that the agency, freedom, and choice with which human beings are endowed (Rowan, 1988; Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961) must be considered within the restraints of the human condition (Frankl, 1985; Fromm, 1973; May, 1969). In other words, being human bestows the capability to direct one's own destiny but it also delimits the nature of that destiny:

"To be sure, a human being is a finite thing, and his freedom is restricted. It is not freedom from the conditions, but it *is* freedom to take a stand toward the conditions."

(Frankl, 1985: 153)

This research has inquired into the lives of individuals, all of whom have been faced with violence in some form or other, with or without choosing it, and therefore have had to find ways of dealing with it. As the findings of this project have revealed one coping strategy employed by individuals is to impose meanings upon the violence encountered. Another mechanism adopted is to rationalise the violence experienced through whatever means are available. Through these processes of meaning-making and rationalisation individuals are acting upon the circumstance in which they find themselves, i.e. experiencing violence. However as discussed above, these processes are dependant upon the context in which violence is encountered, which consequently restricts the possible meanings and rationalisations which can be constructed by individuals. Hence, the experiencing of violence vicariously through the channel of film is firmly situated within the human realm and therefore must be understood as a uniquely human occurrence.

This critical evaluation has recounted the limitations and successes of the procedures adopted in this project, as the four verification tests reveal. It has also confirmed the appropriateness of the paradigm of human scientific psychology to an inquiry of this nature. The paradigmatic assumptions made in this project have enabled the adoption of an evolving strategy, the use of discursive data, and the qualitative analysis of that data and the objective of understanding the experiencing of violence vicariously via the medium of popular film has been achieved. Moreover, the nature of human experience, as proposed by human scientific psychology, has been supported. In short, the integration of the philosophies of human scientific psychology with the model of disciplined inquiry has produced a successful study which is both comprehensive and scientifically viable.

7.5 Possibilities For Future Investigations

The previous sections of this chapter have revealed the achievements of this research project; the paradigm and strategies have been affirmed, the procedures employed have been verified, and the findings have been discussed in the context of existing knowledge. However, questions have emerged during the course of this research which remain unanswered. One of the intended goals was to determine exactly what individuals gain from their experiences of film violence. The findings have shown that a variety of emotions are felt in response to film violence, that individuals sometimes gain knowledge about a life style distinct from their own, that some individuals watch violent

film in order to escape their mundane day-to-day existence, and that the activity of watching violent film offers individuals an opportunity to experience extreme emotions through a safe channel which would ordinarily be unattainable without serious risk. However, further work is required in order to develop these findings. A set of concrete examples of what viewers of violent film are seeking in their decision to experience violence vicariously and what is subsequently gained would inform the findings of this study. The benefits of learning, escapism, and making accessible extraordinary opportunities are somewhat abstract. It is proposed that an inquiry into viewers' motivations for watching a film which is known to include scenes of violence would reveal more detailed accounts of the experiential gain obtained. There are several recent works which discuss the positive experiences that can be gained from watching violent media (e.g. Bok, 1998; Goldstein, 1998; Barker and Brooks, 1998; Ang, 1985) which offer insight into this complex and intangible phenomenon.

Similarly, during the course of this research the question of what individuals enjoy about watching violent film was raised. The findings of each of the studies have contributed implicitly to answering this question through the positive codes which emerged in the analyses. For example, the codes of enjoyment, humour, entertainment, and involving, all confirm that individuals' experiences of film violence are sometimes pleasant and enjoyable. However, some participants were reluctant to discuss exactly what they found enjoyable in representations of violence. For instance, in the code of enjoyment in Study 2, P2 declares that people should use the word "enjoy" to describe their experiences of violence but he did not elaborate upon the aspects of the experience which he found enjoyable. This eventuality is not surprising. The literature search included in Chapter 2, which was conducted in the initial stages of this research, the discourse analysis in Study 2, and the analysis of the press coverage about *Natural Born Killers* in Study 3, have all confirmed the existence of negative discourses of media violence within contemporary Western culture. Due to this, individuals are confronted with the dilemma of admitting enjoyment of a cultural activity which is publicly questioned and discredited both by the popular press and the scientific community. Additionally, this study has found that the cultural conceptions of violence per se overwhelmingly represent the position that violence is immoral and is an example of the depravity within society. It is therefore suggested that further research is necessary in order to reveal the details of exactly what individuals find enjoyable about film violence. Such a project would have to be carefully designed and

conducted with this particular objective as its focus. The findings of this project have revealed the benefits of exploring the ways in which a phenomenon is defined before embarking upon the main phase of the study. Therefore an in-depth inquiry into the conceptualisations of film violence within contemporary culture would be necessary in order to determine how this delicate topic is best approached. Further, dealings with participants would require considerable thought and discretion in order to eradicate the sense of controversy surrounding the pastime of watching violent film. Nevertheless, an exploration of the enjoyable, attractive and fulfilling aspects of film violence is long overdue in psychology and is certainly required if a comprehensive understanding of the activity is to be achieved.

Connected to both the prospective gains of watching violent film and its enjoyable attributes is the question of its cultural function. Violence is a dominant feature within popular contemporary film and because of this the assumption that it performs some kind of function within Western culture is a justified one. In addition to this, the fact that violence has been present in different forms of entertainment throughout the development of civilisation, as documented in Chapter 2, adds to the likelihood that the human race is endowed with a significant appetite for the destructive and the macabre. This research has opened up this debate but can only contribute to it in a speculative manner. For instance, the discovery in Study 1 that every participant had experienced representations of violence on television or in film and the ease of finding participants in the later studies who had watched films of a particularly violent nature suggests that experiencing violence vicariously is a common component in peoples' lives. Additionally, participants' discussions about the scientific discourses of violence, especially the pressure valve discourse and the function of film discourse, reveal that the possibility that violent film fulfils a function in contemporary culture is well established within the public consciousness. A thorough investigation of the function of film violence may involve a comprehensive study of the violence which has persisted over several centuries of literature, theatre, Biblical stories, and the mythologies of the Greeks and Romans. As the presence of these different historical forms of violent entertainment suggest, film is simply a modern day example of the means through which violence can be experienced vicariously (Bloch, 1998; Bok, 1998). Further, an inquiry into the theory of voyeurism (e.g. Mulvey, 1989; Freud, 1916, 1917) may inform the investigation of the function of film violence. After all, it is not only film violence which participants found themselves watching but also actual encounters with violence

in real life. Therefore, as suggested above, perhaps being fascinated by the violent, destructive and harmful aspects of behaviour is one of the unavoidable conditions of being human.

Linked to this theory of being drawn to violent events is the notion of boundary testing, identified in Hill's (1997) audience research. This study has supported Hill's findings by discovering that when individuals watch violent images on screen they are testing their will, i.e. to discover how much one can take before having to look away, leave the cinema, or turn off the television. For example, in the code of menacing violence in Study 1b, P8 discusses the feeling of apprehension, which is fuelled by adrenaline, when watching *The Exorcist*. It is therefore possible that individuals watch scenes of gruesome violence because they have a desire to test themselves and their abilities to cope with whatever may be thrown at them. This may represent a craving to experience as much as is possible during one life time. Moreover, it may confirm that there is an existential need within humankind to confront the unpleasantness and destruction of violence and death in order to experience a fulfilled existence (Fromm, 1973).

In addition, this research has opened up the arena for investigations of different media and audiences. For instance, as Chapter 2 revealed, many studies have been conducted in psychology about children's imitation of violent media content. It is proposed that the design of this project could be used as a prototype for a study about children's experiences of violence via the medium of popular film. Films made for children, many in animated form, are extremely successful and often involve the traditional hero-villain format, such as *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2*, *The Lion King*, *The Mask*, and *The Wizard of Oz*. It would therefore be feasible to conduct a similar inquiry into children's conceptualisations of film violence. The focus of such a study could constitute a comparison between children's play, which may be influenced by a film, and their beliefs about violent behaviour in real life. Previous research has found that boundaries exist between a child's imitative play and their behaviour toward other human beings (Cumberbatch, 1989; Noble, 1975; Stephenson, 1967; Patterson, Litman and Bricker, 1967). Alternatively, children may be engaged in some kind of activity in order to elicit their beliefs and opinions about media violence. One example of such a project is that conducted by Gauntlett (1997) where children were given the task of making their own video productions. Gauntlett discovered that children's views

of the mass media are complex and contradictory, therefore revealing the limitations of the traditional belief that children will blindly adopt the attitudes and behaviours seen on screen. Additionally, Buckingham (1996) has investigated what kinds of images children find disturbing on screen. His results show that a child's emotional experiencing of the media is as complex as that of adults. His later work (Buckingham, Davies, Jones and Kelly, 1999) addresses the new found concern about the effect of children's television programmes on children. In the past, researchers have focused upon discovering the consequences of exposing children to adult television. However, Buckingham et al (1999) describe how this concern about exactly what children are learning from the media has now expanded to include those programmes which are made specifically for them.

This research has been concerned with the medium of film, however, equally violent material is often included in other popular media. The growth of the computer game industry has been overwhelming in recent years and many games involve violent activities, for example *Doom* (GT Interactive), *Grand Theft Auto* (Rockstar Games), and *Quake II* (Activision). Although many games are made for children, those mentioned above have been accredited the certificates of fifteen and eighteen and are therefore made specifically for the adult market. An investigation of adults' experiences of playing games involving violent characters and circumstances would reveal both their motivation for playing and the rewards obtained. Additionally, partaking in a computer game is somewhat different from watching a film as it involves more direct interaction and an active desire to attack the other characters in the game. An investigation into individuals' motivations for playing such games and the experiential rewards gained may enlighten the humanistic-existential theory that in real life people sometimes commit acts of violence in order to overcome the feelings of powerlessness and separateness (Frankl, 1985; Fromm, 1973; May, 1972).

Similarly, the medium of literature tells stories of violence. Literature has escaped the controversy which has surrounded film and computer games, perhaps because it is not consumed in visual form. However, this project revealed that when watching scenes of violence on screen many participants visualise the bloodiest possible outcome in their imagination which is frequently more violent than the pictures portrayed. An investigation of individuals' experiences of reading novels, such as *Filth* (Welsh, 1999), *American Psycho* (Easton Ellis, 1991), *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1958), *Women In*

Love, (Lawrence, 1954) and *Oliver Twist* (Dickens, 1949) may reveal the intricacies of what occurs in the imagination whilst reading about violent events.

This research has uncovered a host of possibilities to be examined in the future of human scientific psychology. The activity of experiencing violence through whatever medium is a fascinating topic and is one which demands further investigation. This project is simply a beginning in many ways but it is a crucial one because it has laid the foundations for future work which aims to investigate the meanings of violence in order to understand the experiencing of violence vicariously.

7.6 Conclusion

The previous sections of this chapter have discussed many aspects of this research in order to assess the appropriateness of the paradigm which has been adopted, the viability of the procedures implemented, and the nature of its findings. However, the ultimate significance of this project is revealed in terms of its addition to knowledge. This final section will therefore reiterate what has been discovered during the course of this research.

First and foremost, the experiential accounts of the participant sample consulted in this project reveal that those who have experienced violence make a distinction between its occurrence in real life and the consumption of violence via popular film. Moreover, an ability to recognise the differences between reality and fantasy has been confirmed. Secondly, violence is defined in a wide variety of ways by those who have experienced it. This is illustrated in the continuums of violence that have been established in the analyses conducted. The implication of this is that violence is not a fixed entity that can be explicated by a single definition but is changeable and dependant upon a number of factors.

This fluidity is also demonstrated in the diverse range of meanings which are attributed to film violence. This project has revealed that violence can be disturbing, shocking, and frightening, yet at the same time it can be enjoyable, amusing and intriguing. The meanings that are imposed upon these experiences of violence are so diverse because they are dependant upon an intricate set of contextual factors. Whether violence is encountered directly in real life or receptively through the channel of film represents the first contextual variable. Similarly, whether or not a violent scene is conceived to be

realistic, believable, or justifiable influences the meanings which are attached to it. Also the genre of the film, the message it intends to convey, viewers' identification with the characters, and the quality of direction and acting each have ramifications in terms of the meaning-making process. Further, the gender of viewers, their previous experiences of violence, and crucially, whether or not they understand the narrative of the film influence their interpretations of violence. The implications these findings have on the state of knowledge are immense. Psychology can no longer treat violence as a homogeneous concept; the audiences of screen violence can no longer be considered as a unitary group that responds to representations of violence in a universal manner; the intelligence and awareness of viewers of violence must be acknowledged and the notion of the passive viewer must be abolished. Most significantly, the consequences of individuals experiencing violence via the medium of popular film can no longer be predicted by a causal law of behaviour.

Additionally, this research has disclosed that the meaning-making process is not always straightforward. On occasions violence can appear to be without meaning. This is best illustrated in individuals' rationalisations of violence. The accounts in this project have uncovered several means by which violence can be rationalised, but this can be a challenging process. Indeed, when individuals are faced with an act of violence in which they can find no meaning they detach it from the human sphere by attributing it to some external source, such as an animal instinct, an innate drive, the lack of parental affection during childhood, or the influence of a depraved society. Nevertheless, narrativising the occurrence of violence in this way enables viewers of violent film to make sense of the images with which they are confronted.

As well as disclosing the intricacies of experiencing violence via the medium of popular film and discovering that narrative and context are crucial in individuals' meaning-making processes, this study has implications for how research into media violence is conducted in the future. In the dominant effects research little attention has been paid to the knowledge which individuals possess about the workings of the film industry. Violent media has been assumed to be something to which individuals are exposed without choice. However, that is not the case, especially in investigating adult audiences (child audiences constitute a different concern which has not been considered in this project). Going to the cinema, hiring a video, and watching a television programme all involve conscious decisions. Experiencing violence in real life

is not usually voluntary and the distinctions made between film violence and real life violence by participants in this study reflect this essential difference. Hence, exposure to violence in real life and opting to watch a violent film are distinct experiences. Further, individuals' decisions to watch a particular film or television programme are not made blindly. The findings of this study confirm those of Barker and Brooks (1998) and Hill (1997), that film viewers are well informed about the nature of films which they choose to watch. For instance, participants in this project illustrated their knowledge of genre, stereotypical portrayals of men and women, the hero-villain structure of narrative, the use of music and special effects, and the use of advertising and its ability to create a set of expectations about a particular film. This knowledge enables individuals to understand the conventions used in film and therefore to consider what is at stake when entering a cinema or pressing play on a video. Hence, when doing research with viewers of violent film this awareness should be considered and respected instead of assuming that they would rather not be experiencing violence in this way.

Additionally, there are several methodological issues which will have a bearing upon future human scientific psychology research. The findings of Study 3 have serious ramifications for the method of showing clips to participants out of context in order to determine their responses to them. This is a method which features substantially both in psychological effects research (e.g. Berkowitz and Rawlings, 1963; Bandura et al, 1963a, 1963b, 1961) and in mass communications audience research (e.g. Schlesinger et al, 1999; Barker and Brooks, 1998; Hill, 1997). Study 3 revealed marked differences in individuals' experiencing of the three clips from *Natural Born Killers* depending upon whether or not they had previously seen the whole film. Those who had no contextual framework into which these clips could be placed found the task of interpreting them far more challenging than those who were familiar with the film's narrative. Instead of referring to the film's story or its characters in order to understand a violent scene, individuals without this contextual knowledge created their own narratives through which the violence could be interpreted. The implication of this is that showing violent clips out of context in order to explore individuals' reactions to them cannot be related to the real life event of watching a film due to the substantial differences in the ways that scenes of violence are made meaningful.

The method of interpretative phenomenological analysis implemented in this study also has implications for the future use of this analytic tool. The outline of the analysis recounted by Smith, Jarman and Osborne (1999) has been developed to provide a rigid structure of five stages to be employed. These guidelines add a degree of clarity in what is required to perform interpretative phenomenological analysis, but the fundamental difference between Smith, Jarman and Osborne's (1999) account of interpretative phenomenological analysis and that adopted in this project is revealed in the fourth stage of Coding. This penultimate stage, followed only by writing up the report, involves establishing a series of codes. Chapter 3 introduced the definition of a code in this adaptation of interpretative phenomenological analysis as a set of discourse which reflects both the shared and unshared aspects of lived experience which contribute to individuals' experiencing of violence. Further, a code was described as an integration of the world and the person. The world is represented in the code's universality, in that it is available to everyone; the person is reflected in individuals' idiosyncratic uses of the code. For example, the code of enjoyment may feature in many individuals' discussions about their experiences of film violence, but not all of them will be positive, some may describe how little they enjoyed it. Hence, a code represents the phenomenology of violence. The introduction of codes as the outcome of analysis therefore represents a significant development of the super-ordinate themes which are the product of Smith, Jarman and Osborne's (1999) version of interpretative phenomenological analysis. Instead of revealing an in-depth account of the topics discussed by individuals about their meaningful experiences, evolving a set of codes from the data enables the researcher to propose how an experience is approached phenomenologically.

In conclusion, this project has investigated the experiencing of violence through the channel of popular film in such a way that it represents a significant departure from the existing body of psychological effects research. It has also supported and expanded upon the findings of audience research conducted within the discipline of mass communications. The success of this project is also reflected in the positive results of the four verification tests as well as in the methodological advancements it has made. However, the findings of this research project have made a fundamental discovery concerning the experiencing of violent film. The studies conducted within this project have revealed that the primary concern when experiencing violence vicariously through the channel of popular film is to make sense of it. Hence, the idiosyncratic perceptions,

interpretations, and narratives which are constructed during the act of watching violent film are fundamental to the psychological understanding of the phenomenon of film violence.

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Filmography

This filmography includes details of both films and television programmes within the body of the text.

***The Accused* (1984)** Director: Jonathan Kaplan.

***Alien* (1979)** Director: Ridley Scott.

***Aliens* (1986)** Director: James Cameron.

***Alien 3* (1992)** Director: David Fincher.

***Alien Resurrection* (1997)** Director: Jean-Pierre Jeunet.

***An American Werewolf in London* (1981)** Director: John Landis.

***Animal Hospital* (BBC television)** Factual television series exploring the work of veterinary surgeries and the RSPCA in Britain.

***Apocalypse Now* (1979)** Director: Francis Ford Coppola.

***Basic Instinct* (1991)** Director: Paul Verhoeven.

***The Basketball Diaries* (1995)** Director: Scott Kalvert

***The Bill* (Thames Television)** Television serial drama set in a London Police Station.

***Blazing Saddles* (1974)** Director: Mel Brooks.

***Blue Velvet* (1986)** Director: David Lynch.

***Bonnie and Clyde* (1967)** Director: Arthur Penn.

***Born on the Fourth of July* (1989)** Director: Oliver Stone.

***Cape Fear* (1991)** Director: Martin Scorsese.

***Carlitto's Way* (1993)** Director: Brian de Palma.

***Casino* (1995)** Director: Martin Scorsese.

***Casualty* (BBC Television)** Television serial drama set in a Hospital Accident and Emergency Ward.

***Champion* (1949)** Director: Stanley Kramer.

***Child's Play 3* (1991)** Director: Lawrence Bender.

***A Clockwork Orange* (1971)** Director: Stanley Kubrick.

***Closing Ranks* (Central Television)** Television drama which tells the story of police officers. Including scenes of domestic violence.

***Copland* (1997)** Director: James Mangold.

***Copycat* (1995)** Director: Jon Amiel.

***Coronation Street* (Granada Television)** Soap opera based in an inner city town of Manchester.

***Cracker* (Granada Television)** Television drama exploring the work of a forensic psychologist.

***Crash* (1996)** Director: David Cronenberg.

***Crimewatch UK* (BBC Television)** Factual programme detailing real life crimes in order to obtain help from the public in solving them.

***The Deer Hunter* (1978)** Director: Michael Cimino.

***Die Hard* (1988)** Director: John McTiernan.

***Dillinger* (1945)** Director: Max Nosseck.

***Dillinger* (1973)** Director: John Milius.

***Donnie Brasco* (1997)** Director: Mike Newell.

***Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1920)** Director: John S. Robertson.

***EastEnders* (BBC Television)** Soap opera based in London's east end.

***The Exorcist* (1973)** Director: William Friedkin.

***Fatal Attraction* (1987)** Director: Adrian Lyne.

***Face/Off* (1997)** Director: John Woo.

***Fierce Creatures* (1997)** Director: Robert Young.

***Fight Club* (1999)** Director: David Fincher.

***Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare* (1991)** Director: Rachel Talaly.

***Friday the Thirteenth* (1980)** Director: Sean S. Cunningham.

***From Dusk Till Dawn* (1995)** Director: Robert Rodriguez.

***Full Metal Jacket* (1987)** Director: Stanley Kubrick.

The Godfather Trilogy See *The Godfather*, *The Godfather Part II*, and *The Godfather Part III*.

***The Godfather* (1972)** Director: Francis Ford Coppola.

The Godfather Part II (1974) Director: Francis Ford Coppola.

The Godfather Part III (1990) Director: Francis Ford Coppola.

Good Morning, Vietnam (1987) Director: Barry Levinson.

GoodFellas (1990) Director: Martin Scorsese.

The Great Train Robbery (1903) Director: Edwin S. Porter.

La Haine (1995) Director: Mathieu Kassovitz.

Halloween (1978) Director: John Carpenter.

Halloween Two (1981) Director: Rick Rosenthal.

Halloween Three: Season of the Witch (1983) Directors: Tommy Lee Wallace and Peter Jamison.

Halloween Four: The Return of Michael Myers (1988) Director: Dwight H. Little.

Halloween Five: The Revenge of Michael Myers (1989) Director: Dominique Othenin-Girard.

Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers (1995) Directors: Joe Chappelle and Bryan Ryman.

Halloween: H20 (1998) Director: Steve Miner.

The Hand that Rocks the Cradle (1991) Director: Curtis Hanson.

Heat (1995) Director: Michael Mann.

Heathers (1988) Director: Michael Lehmann.

Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer (1990) Director: John McNaughton.

Hollyoaks (Channel 4) Soap opera based on the lives of young people in Chester.

Independence Day (1996) Director: Roland Emmerich.

I Know What You Did Last Summer (1997) Director: Jim Gillespie.

The Jackall (1997) Director: Michael Caton-Jones.

James Bond The character of an English spy created in the novels by Ian Fleming who also features in the series of films which tell the stories of his adventures, for example, *Goldfinger* (Director: Guy Hamilton, 1964) *From Russia With Love* (Director: Terence Young, 1973), *GoldenEye* (Director: Martin Campbell, 1995) and *Tomorrow Never Dies* (Director: James Cameron, 1997).

Jo Brand A British comedienne who has performed stand up comedy on British television.

Judge Dredd (1995) Director: Danny Cannon.

Kalifornia (1993) Director: Sena.

King Kong (1933) Director: Merian C. Cooper.

Kiss the Girls (1997) Director: Gary Fleder.

The Krays (1990) Director: Peter Medak.

LA Confidential (1997) Director: Curtis Hanson.

L.A. Takedown (1989) Director: Michael Mann.

Lethal Weapon (1987) Director: Richard Donner.

Lethal Weapon 4 (1998) Director: Richard Donner.

Lion King (1994) Director: Roger Allers.

Lord of the Flies (1963) Director: Peter Brook.

The Mask (1994) Director: Charles Russell.

Men In Black (1996) Director: Barry Sonnenfeld.

Misery (1990) Director: Rob Reiner.

Natural Born Killers (1994) Director: Oliver Stone.

Neighbours (Grundy Television) Australian soap opera set in a suburb of Melbourne.

The News Factual television programme covering both world wide and local news, could be seen on any channel, terrestrial, digital and satellite.

A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984) Director: Wes Craven.

A Nightmare on Elm Street Part Two: Freddy's Revenge (1985) Director: Jack Sholder.

A Nightmare on Elm Street Part Three: Dream Warriors (1987) Director: Chuck Russell.

A Nightmare on Elm Street Part Four: The Dream Master (1988) Director: Renny Harlin.

A Nightmare on Elm Street: The Dream Child (1989) Director: Stephen Hopkins.

Nil By Mouth (1997) Director: Gary Oldman.

No Child of Mine (BBC Television) A feature length drama made for the *Screen One* series on BBC2.

Once Were Warriors (1994) Director: Lee Tamahori.

Platoon (1986) Director: Oliver Stone.

Prime Suspect (Granada Television) Television drama set in the serious crimes investigation department of a Northern England Police Station.

Pulp Fiction (1994) Director: Quentin Tarantino.

Rambo: First Blood Part Two (1985) Director: George Pan Cosmatos.

Reservoir Dogs (1992) Director: Quentin Tarantino.

The Roaring Twenties (1939) Director: Raoul Walsh.

Rocky (1976) Director: John G. Avildsen.

Rocky II (1979) Director: Sylvester Stallone.

Rocky III (1982) Director: Sylvester Stallone.

Rocky IV (1985) Director: Sylvester Stallone.

Rocky V (1990) Director: John G. Avildsen.

Saving Private Ryan (1998) Director: Steven Spielberg.

Scarface (1983) Director: Brian de Palma.

Schindler's List (1993) Director: Steven Spielberg.

Scream (1996) Director: Wes Craven.

***Sense and Sensibility* (1995)** Director: Ang Lee.

***Seven* (1995)** Director: David Fincher.

***Shallow Grave* (1994)** Director: Danny Boyle.

***Silence of the Lambs* (1990)** Director: Jonathan Demme.

***Sleepers* (1996)** Director: Barry Levinson.

***Sybil* (1976)** Director: Daniel Petrie.

Taggart (Scottish Television) Television drama series set in the serious crimes department of a Glasgow Police Station.

***Taxi Driver* (1976)** Director: Martin Scorsese.

***The Terminator* (1984)** Director: James Cameron.

***Tom and Jerry* (Hanna-Barbera Productions)** Short animations featuring Tom cat and Jerry mouse.

***Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997)** Director: Roger Spottiswoode.

***Toy Story* (1995)** Director: John Lasseter.

***Toy Story 2* (1999)** Director: John Lasseter.

***Trainspotting* (1996)** Director: Danny Boyle.

***Trip Trap* (BBC Television)** A feature length drama made for the *Screen One* season on BBC2.

***True Romance* (1993)** Director: Tony Scott.

***Under Siege* (1992)** Director: Andrew Davis.

***The Usual Suspects* (1995)** Director: Bryan Singer.

***Wes Craven's New Nightmare* (1994)** Director: Wes Craven.

***When the Fighting Starts* (Channel 4)** Television documentary about fighting in city centres at the weekend, made for the *Battered Britain* series on Channel 4.

***Wild at Heart* (1990)** Director: David Lynch.

***The Wild Bunch* (1969)** Director: Sam Peckinpah.

***The Wild One* (1953)** Director: Laslo Benedek.

***William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet* (1996)** Director: Baz Luhrmann.

***The Wizard of Oz* (1939)** Director: Victor Fleming.

***The X Files* (Twentieth Century Fox/BBC Television)** Science-fiction drama series set in the FBI Department which investigates unknown phenomena.

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Appendix 1

Transcription Information

1.1 Transcription Guidelines

All the transcripts included in this project are presented using the following conventions:

Speech Characteristics	Symbols Used In Transcripts
Pause (under 30 seconds)	..
Long Pause (over 30 seconds)
False start	-
Interruption	//
Added text	[] e.g., [laughs] [coughs]
Part of text missing	[. .]

The examples below further clarify the use of these symbols, shown in bold:

- P8: what I wrote about was probably the most violence I'd witnessed .. and that was the .. accident when I was in the police - the traffic accident .. and one man getting out to the other and in fact the one that was in the wrong then chasing the one that was getting out just to exchange names and addresses
- P12: right well as I wrote on the questionnaire the thing that sprung to mind immediately was that film called er *Reservoir Dogs* do you .. want me to .. go into .. some more detail [. .] I just burst into tears and left I didn't see the rest of it .. but er I just I just thought how senseless
- P36: that made me smile when she's got that white scarf on her head it's beautiful it's beautifully shot the bridge and the mountains and what he says to my god and in the witness of god and the mountains and the river and everything else and then that car goes past and she changes from this blond wig and the lovely it was almost like medieval that rag thing that she was wearing and then that truck goes past they jeer and yell and she goes fuck you arse holes and you know **[turns back with a loving smile]**
- P44: yes they don't generally like punch them they just kill them //
- P42: you don't really see him killing anyone but I don't know like the bullet thing and the knife thing

1.2 Example Transcript From An Individual Interview

Below is an example of the transcripts gained from the individual interviews conducted. The interview material obtained was typed up following the guidelines in Appendix 1.1 as this example illustrates.

Transcript of the Individual Interview with Participant 2 in Study 1b

- F¹: First of all then if you could just say a little bit about erm .. anything you can remember that stands out as violent ?
- P2: Well there's one thing .. that ... even now .. and erm .. the probation - it happened actually in May 95 ... but even now I can still er .. see him .. stood over me .. and I'm on the floor .. and erm .. hear what he's saying when a neighbour said to him .. leave him alone he says he'll have another heart attack .. and erm ... to quote him in his exact words he said yes bloody great his father having knew I'd had a heart attack in erm .. 93 and erm .. you know .. what he did to me could have killed me actually ... the erm .. violence of the assault and that .. and as I say these things are still in my mind now people turn to you and say erm .. I know how you feel .. there's no-one knows how you feel ... no-one ever will only yourself .. this is what the police kept saying you see we know how you feel I says you don't know how I feel ... //
- F: So how //
- P2: Even my own family doesn't know how I feel .. they don't know when I go out now - even that erm .. I'm always looking to that area for something coming again .. you see .. it's amazing ... and after all that time
- F: Do you want to just explain a little bit about what happened ?
- P2: Well [sighs] I live in a - a small close ... the house it's over in that corner you see and .. mine is just round upon this bend here [illustrates the position of his house with his hands] so the distance is .. virtually .. very small .. and erm .. I had no children .. but there are a lot of children in the close ... and I found it totally unacceptable that three years prior to 95 ... after this boy erm passed his driving test .. the speed he used to drive into the close was totally unacceptable .. I mean in my opinion *Neighbourhood Watch* .. which was supposed to prevail was non-existent .. because erm .. neighbours just didn't bother they weren't interested you see .. so you couldn't sort of form a .. a relationship within the neighbourhood community of which there were only ... ten houses eleven houses so I mean it wasn't hard was it really .. and I told him that his speed was unacceptable and to cut his speed down I says - fo - the children ... erm .. he still comes into the close even today ... in the same manner I reported it to the Hous - //
- F: Does he still live there ?
- P2: Ooh no he doesn't live there he lives with a .. friend of his I think .. but erm he's now got a little boy of his own he's not married but erm - anyway that's beside the point .. but erm he still doesn't .. what happened was hasn't .. sort of .. calmed him down to that degree .. but erm you see there was no back up from any of the neighbours .. people were afraid to sort of .. which I suppose is right really to take sides if - for want of another way of putting it .. but erm .. I was .. on this particular night in question I was sat in my car my wife came out of the house got into the car .. and I was taking her to the *Royal Infirmary* where she works nights she does - still does actually .. and erm I saw this boy over this side with his reversing lights on in his car so I'm waiting thinking he's going straight out you see .. so I'm waiting and waiting .. and then it's getting time where my wife's going to be late if I don't s - .. so I started to reverse the car with that he shot straight across the back of me you see .. sheer provocation .. for no reason .. other than the fact as I say it was three years since I .. but I've never had any .. talk with him since .. although his father did say at the time when I had the heart attack .. you've got to take care of yourself now you know and what have you .. this is his father so anyway erm [sighs] ... I went argh [head in his

¹ Facilitator

hands] .. I couldn't believe what he'd done you know ... of course he reversed at the side of my step son who was sat in the *Metro* he'd moved the *Metro* for me to go out .. and he was going to put the *Metro* back .. and erm ... he sat there and he witnessed everything that happened I was very lucky in that sense but erm there was no-one else about .. in the close whether anybody was watching or not I don't know but erm ... it - it - as soon as I did that you see it seemed to provoke him .. because he jumped out of his car and he came round to my driving door wrenched it open and started verbal abuse and his fists raised and everything shouting at me I can't even remember what he said you know I was that shocked .. and then he slammed the door that hard that he damaged the lock on the car door .. so then [sighs] I couldn't believe what had happened you know ... so I got out of the car and I went round to him .. I says what seems to be your problem .. with that he got out of the car came round to me and [makes a fist and holds it against his chest] .. into the chest and straight onto the floor .. which is the point of fact that could have killed me ... then he stood over me this is right outside a neighbour's gate who I can trust anyway this neighbour and erm I shouted this neighbour .. and I'm on the floor the next thing I know the boy's mother comes running over and she's a school governer by the way .. and she came running over she says .. shouting down at me who's on the floor .. and he's stood above me with his fists ready leave him alone .. what the hell could I do [laughs] //

F: She was telling you ?

P2: She was telling me to leave him alone he's twice my height .. I'd never have had a cat in hell's chance .. couldn't have got anywhere near him .. not that I would dare do it for the simple reason of the .. heart you see ... so anyway erm ..[neighbour's first name] come running out ... and it was then when he shouted to him what are doing .. leave him alone he'll have another heart attack where he says yes .. bloody great .. you see so eventually things calm down .. but I'm still on the floor with bad .. you know back and what have you .. well in shock anyway .. with that someone went to the police station at [town] .. and informed them .. but no-one came and then erm .. if one of them had come at then that precise time they took him then .. they could have put him in a position whereby he would have learned a lesson there and then .. but it never happened .. and I spent from May .. to November .. taking him to court ... and people said that I was brave .. but I wasn't brave at all I just didn't see .. why he .. erm had the given right to do what he did to me .. and the fact that erm .. to do it to anyone else either .. and this was the reason I took him to court but it wasn't the police that took him to court ... I had all the stress and trauma .. of being afraid to go out of the house and daren't move .. I had to have someone with me all the time .. when I took my wife to work my stepson came with me there was always someone there with me you see .. course he didn't live round there .. but he kept coming to the house time and time again .. but the police never went to him you know .. and erm .. I was so .. incensed being .. having been a good citizen all my life .. that it was - it incensed me to think he did this for no reason whatever .. and as I say was he going to do it to someone else .. I don't know so erm .. I kept pressurising the police .. my stepson er - went to the station and reported the incident and what have you erm the next day there was a phone call .. you better come to the station and make a statement you see I said I can't come to the station I wasn't well .. in fact the doctor was there with me .. and looks to sort of say - and the doctor turned round and says - picked up the phone and said you'd better get someone to the house to get a statement .. so eventually this policeman came to the house .. at six o'clock the following evening ... er what happened you know where did it happen I told him where it happened he never moved out of the chair to even go and see where it happened .. to assess the situation himself you know .. to see how or where I fell as to what obstacles were there to injure my back and you kno - all things like this you see no-one seems to be bothered ... so anyway erm .. he's taking this statement and everything and erm little did he know it wasn't - arranged this that erm my wife's friend was sat in the lounge with her you see .. and they were talking about a trip they were planning for a weekend .. and we - two friends actually .. and they were listening to what this constable was saying when he was taking the statement ... and then he leaned across the kitchen table to me and he says are you sure you're not just .. you know doing this for money ... I couldn't believe it I says I think you'd better be careful what you're saying I said because otherwise you can get out of my house ... either you co - conduct the statement .. in the proper manner as I said or get out now .. you can imagine the state

I was in are you doing this for money ... I couldn't believe it .. and all this built up and built up until the statement was finally finished ... then he says to me he says sign this .. so I'd still got my head on right I says I'm not signing that .. he says what do you mean .. he says what's the point in me sitting here and making it all out if you're not going to sign it ... I says I'll sign it when I get a copy .. of what you've written what do you mean .. so then he gets onto his phone you see to [name of police station] maybe I don't know [P] says he's not signing this statement until er .. he gets a copy .. he says it's a bit silly this really .. I don't know who he was speaking to but anyway .. ten minutes later phone came on and yes [P] is well within his legal rights .. I couldn't believe it .. so anyway erm .. I made a statement like and they said like erm ... he went then he went up to [town] and copied the statement and brought it back to me and I went through it and everything before signing it .. so anyway erm .. the witness of course was my stepson and they asked if he could go up to [town] and make a statement and I arranged for him when he finished work and he went up and did this ... to cut a long story short .. the intimidation started from .. that .. day .. the boy's father .. did everything in his power .. to intimidate me because obviously he'd seen the police come and what have you so he must have put two and two together but nothing was happening ... you see .. but when I took me wife to court his father used to wait er - to work .. his father used to wait he used to follow me all down the road .. tailgate me in the car .. and I kept a cool head I don't know how I did it I don't know to this day .. but I kept a cool head and I kept him at thirty miles an hour in a thirty mile zone and he was furious you see .. it really wound him up .. because it went on and on you know until ..you know he even used to wait at the door for me coming back you know //

F: Why do you think he did ? //

P2: When there was no-one there he'd shout abuse

F: Why do you think he was doing that ?

P2: For his son I would imagine you see .. either nothing happened and it was now the end of June .. and I put the situation to Mr B [MP] .. *he contacted the [county] Police ..[county]* Police contacted me you know erm he still hadn't been arrested and charged .. or given a talking to nothing ... erm [county] constabulary they contacted me the Chi - assistant Chief Constable .. and he said I want to sort this problem out with you I says I haven't got a problem I said it's you that's got the problem not me .. of course it - this caused distempment then between the police and me .. they weren't happy about the way I was conducting myself towards them and I still came back I says I haven't got the problem you've got the problem .. and it went on and on and as I say Mr B [MP] and one or two more people .. until eventually erm I thought well there's only one answer to this ... so I wrote a letter and I explained everything that had happened how I'd been violently assaulted .. and what have you to the er Mrs C the Crown Prosecutor .. in London and thought well .. I mean that's me .. if you want an answer to something go to the top .. you know .. the others weren't bothered anyway they were hoping it was going away .. so I wrote to Mrs C and I ask her point blank .. tha - you know I told her that this man had not been interviewed to my knowledge he'd never been warned as to his conduct ... erm here's me in a state of poor health now .. on top of what was there before erm .. was this man going to be charged with violent assault or was he not .. and if not why not .. within two days .. of me writing to her .. he'd been arrested and charged with common assault .. you see all these things you see were all erm ... upsetting me because nothing was happening .. and this is what - this is what the situation was .. it made me worse .. and erm .. four times it was adjourned at court .. for the simple reason he was messing the magistrates about .. he hadn't got a solicitor here and he hadn't got a solicitor there and what have you you see .. and the crown prosecuting service in [city] .. a Mr D he was erm getting a bit uptight about this he wasn't very happy at all ... little did the family know that my friend from Nottingham .. a Mr E whom I've known for many years .. every time there was a court appearance he came over .. and he sat in the court as an observer .. they didn't know this he even sat at the side of the boy's mother and he heard comments she was making ... but at - to cut a long story short again at the very .. the erm .. July the 15th .. he was due to appear in court for the first time .. no July the 17th .. on the 15th .. as I say the intimidation I have pages and pages of intimidation .. you wouldn't believe what *his father did to me* .. unbelievable .. and erm all that intimidation now is on file .. because I made it quite clear to the prosecuting counsel that this information was to be kept on file should it be required

at a further court appearance .. so it's all there .. but even now you see he still tries to intimidate if no-one's around to observe ... that's the erm .. the lyings of a coward .. you see cowards always do things behind people's backs don't they .. however ... this Mr D you know [clears his throat] this 15th of July I went over the paper shop ... to get the [sighs] evening *Mercury* and - it was Saturday evening .. and who should be coming to the shop but the boy's father .. so I made a point of [putting his hands to one side demonstrating his path] not giving him any .. lee way to be abusive towards me so I mov - you know not giving him any reasons for provocation or nothing .. I never have done right the way through this er - incident ... but .. he did no more - he deliberately made his way towards to me .. and I started to shake .. you know [laughs] it's crazy really .. but I started to shake and he said to me he says you've got me [P's first name] he says when you've finished with my lad ... I went to the paper shop .. stood there for my paper and all of a sudden I collapsed on the floor [laughs] ... with sheer erm .. with the shock of what he said .. he'd threatened my life you see .. they phoned for the police at the paper shop the police came and what have you and erm ... sorted things out and got me home .. and they went in the house to him .. what they said to him I don't know to this day ... but I did on the Monday .. was erm .. yes it was the Monday yes when he was appearing in court but I wasn't asked to go to court that day .. but I erm wrote to the crown prosecutions office in [city] a Mr D .. and I explained to him what had happened and I also .. made it quite clear to them that this was intimidation of a witness .. and as such I expect it to be dealt with in a very serious manner .. and that man never .. came anywhere near .. the court ... because obviously he'd been warned away .. but he could have gone to jail you know .. little did he realise this was type of bombastic person he is .. the boy's father ... the boy himself he's a bit of a macho .. you know you've met many of them nowadays I suppose .. but erm .. however that case was adjourned that day then it was adjourned again and it was adjourned again but on the third adjournment .. Mr D said to the magistrate I will expect this case to be dealt with at the next appearance in this court no way will I contra - you know accept that it's going to go on another adjournment .. so it had to be dealt with there and then on the 11th of November .. so the 11th of November came and [Mr E's first name]'s still in there with the court you see and he's still mingling around like listening to this listening to that ... and I wasn't in the court first off but he said that this Mr F [boy's name] was stood .. I probably shouldn't have said his name there [pointing to the tape] //

F: I won't use his name

P2: But he stood in the court and erm ..he got what the police could have given him .. half an hour after he'd done what he did to me .. because he was shaking ... facing the magistrates he was re - .. he'd been brought down .. to his level .. which is wha - I mean I wasn't trying to be clever ... all I was trying to do was make sure what he did to me didn't happen to anybody else ... and the magistrate turned t - well she fetched me in then afterwards .. you know and I had to sit in the court and listen to her then .. she bound him over for a year because Mr D asked me if I would be agreed to drop the common assault .. to a lesser degree .. to get it out of the way the case you see .. we'd made the point so .. he said to the magistrate like he said [P]'s not a vindictive person .. because I never have been and erm .. he's agreed to .. you know to drop the common assault and be dealt with in a prop - in another manner ... so she [the magistrate] turned to him [Mr F] and she said to him .. you listen very carefully to what I'm telling you Mr F ... she says when you go from this court today .. she says you don't ever .. and I mean ever .. do to anyone .. what you did to [P] .. and she says I don't only mean in this country either .. she says I mean anywhere you might be .. she says don't ever forget it .. she says because if you appear before me again she says .. well you know what to expect ... finished bound over for a year ... but [sighs] I say .. all this trouble I went through to bring this about ... but erm .. I mean another incident was .. a few days before the court hearing a Mrs G rang me from [name of police station] she's the liason - the witness liason officer .. to ask if everything was alright for us appearing in court like myself and my stepson .. I said [sighs] not really no it was .. ooh yes that's right a fe - so erm she says so what's the problem because she wanted it out the way as well you see .. I said well I said apparently the [town] police have lost my stepson's statement ... she went crazy .. she says you've got to be joking .. I says I'm not joking no I says I've had the police at my house three times .. I said I didn't even know - I said - I don't - known you were interested I'd have contacted you about it .. I said

but they've been to my house three times and three times I wouldn't let them through the door .. and he says well can we copy his statement I says I don't even know where it is I says his statement is personal bus - to do with himself I said I'm not influenced him in his statement I says - he's made it out himself and it's in his jurisdiction .. wherever it is it's - it was in his room somewhere in the house .. and I'm not going searching for it .. he says well can you ask him to give us a copy I says no I won't .. I says you'd better go and find the one you've lost ... and all this trauma you see .. all built up

F: If we .. perhaps go back a bit .. to when it did actually happen .. what kind of feelings erm .. did you feel when it was happening ?

P2: Well the biggest feeling I thought was dismay .. I couldn't - I couldn't come to terms with what he - had happened ... you know erm .. the fear he put into me ... I'd even had .. when I'd gone over to the paper shop the same paper shop .. [sighs] you know full well that things are being discussed in his home .. because even his small brother .. stood outside the paper shop .. like this [folds his arms] and glared at me .. at what I'd done to his brother ... you see and all things you see and even then I used to avoid .. I used to look out of the kitchen window and watch for any of them going across toward the paper shop .. then when - if I saw one go across I'd wait until they came back .. and then I would go myself ...

F: So it has staid with you ? //

P2: Oh yes yes .. all the time .. still there now it'll never leave me

F: So what //

P2: Even my wife doesn't understand how I feel .. no-one does

F: When erm .. when you think about it now - then .. what kind of emotions go through you as you think about it ?

P2: Well not bitter I'd say more dismay than bitterness .. you know erm .. I know now as to what value I would place .. him in society .. virtually nill ... if he can't control himself in that manner just because someone tells him to you know watch his speed or whatever .. then he's not much good to someone else is he .. you know this is what I can't understand .. but er as I say .. you know nobody talks a - about it round the neighbourhood you see ...

F: Do you ever try and wonder .. why he did what he did to you ?

P2: Purely and simply because he was that type of a person in a sense of I said to you a macho man .. who the hell was I you know .. who did I think I was talking to [laughs] so erm .. you know I mean he was of a stature .. to er out number me any time he wanted ... because of the fact that I couldn't retaliate .. because of ill health anyway .. now was this in his mind when he did it .. I don't think it was but it could have well been in his mind afterwards ..

F: So //

P2: But that person said to him well you'll kill him and this happened just after .. that man was burned to death in that flat ... //

F: Ooh I don't know about that //

P2: [town] .. and them burst in and burnt him to death //

F: Oh yes I think I've //

P2: Further down the Scalpy Close ... that's .. just down the road from me .. so my mind you know used to reflect to that god .. I'm sat here and that poor devil's had that happen to him you know what - it could have happened to me ... and all - I was living in fear all the time ... and even now he still tries to provoke as far as I - .. so I'm still .. watching ... wary all the time .. and as I say it never leaves you .. I don't think it ever will ...

F: So erm .. in a practical sense .. how has it changed what you do ?

P2: Erm ... where I could go out of the house and across on to Malham - Evesham Drive and then catch the bus .. I don't ... I go out of the house and immediately turn right and go round the back of the houses //

F: To avoid //

P2: To avoid .. being any where near the .. locality .. or in the vicinity of their house ... it's crazy [laughs] but I'm not sure you see whether erm .. I'm even wary as to any .. I went that way one day .. little did I know that his father had come out of the house .. he must have watched me come out .. and walked around that block and he was walking straight towards me .. you can't imagine the fear that went through my head .. when I saw him there .. had he done it on purpose .. he didn't do anything because has it happens there

- was somebody passing at the same time wha - what would have happened had they not have been .. no-one else about I could have probably been down again .. I shall never know .. but he has made me a person now that's erm .. well that virtually lives in fear and erm .. I just don't know how - to do it .. I don't think there are any answers anyway ... this happens and erm .. that's what got me more you know when people turn round and say I know how you feel .. they don't know how you feel .. no-one does .. never will [sighs]
- F: Do you think this experience has changed your attitude towards people ?
- P2: No not really .. there are some bad people erm ... you see I'm one that er - would like to put rights to wrong er - wrongs to right but sadly .. it - it's a difficult task .. but erm my wife's attitude is that erm .. oh leave it alone you know .. but I was never brought up like that you see .. I was brought up in a manner whereby I respected other people .. the same a lot of people my age were anyway .. but now there doesn't seem much respect for people at all .. sadly ... a lot of young people today just erm couldn't care less but that er doesn't smear all of them .. because there are some good kids ... I mean the kids are all round me now you see this is one of the .. lighter parts of it .. the kids are around me now .. they're all you know saying oh [P's first name] you know .. they give me that bit of a lift .. to think that there's somebody there that .. that matters .. that cares .. [laughs] it's silly isn't it .. that's the children that [smiles]
- F: Has this experience erm .. changed your opinion about violence at all ?
- P2: I think erm .. there's not enough .. immediate action on violence .. when these things happen I think there's a lot of violence .. is ignored .. which I think is wrong .. and erm but then again I mean er .. what's the answer to curing it .. people just turn round and say oh well we've not got the facilities for this or the facilities for that .. but erm .. you see I don't think it needs .. I think it needs an approach whereby .. somebody can give a firm .. meaning to correction .. there and then without it ever going to courts and things like this .. I don't think people are made to realise that er .. what they do is wrong ..perhaps if they were .. then perhaps if they were they might never do it again .. and it would never lead to something far more serious but erm .. I think - only last week I saw .. I would have loved to have gone out to sort this out you see but I daren't do it .. there were four boys from the .. school up on [name] Lane .. and they're bullying a young boy coming from the shop and they were really bullying him .. but what could I do ... what would they have done to me ..
- F: So when you see when you see an incident like that .. how do you feel about it ?
- P2: Terrible ... to think that they can do something so - awful you know ... it's just not right .. the same - as I say .. what he's done to me .. I couldn't comprehend it at all .. there's no justification in it whatever ... none whatever .. I even tried to apologise to his mother .. apparently when I was helped to my feet he said something to me and I used .. which is right out of my erm .. vocabulary some .. a foul word or something like this .. I had no knowledge of it .. but the following day .. I did try and apologise to her I said I was sorry .. apparently I said someone told me I used a er some language unbecoming of me .. I says and I can only apologise I don't want your apologies so ... that's what I got then
- F: So did you .. did you feel the need to talk to anybody about this ?
- P2: Oh I've talked to many people yes
- F: Do you think it helped at all ?
- P2: Sometimes yes
- F: In what way do you think it can help ? //
- P2: I think one thing that erm .. I think it was never .. taken seriously enough in my family ... you know what I mean .. it was - I didn't want people I didn't want my wife and .. stepson and what have you you know .. doting over me and saying oh are you alright this and .. I didn't want that ... but when I tried to talk about it ... unless it was in front of .. other friends .. it more or less fell on deaf ears you know
- F: Why do you think ? //
- P2: Well I .. I suppose really I was asking them for answers and there were no answers to come [laughs] .. there just weren't any answers at all
- F: No ... erm .. did you erm .. contact [counseling organisation] ?
- P2: I did yes
- F: What made you make that decision to contact them ?
- P2: Well I [sighs] I just thought they might be able to help me .. but I'd - the help I wanted I didn't feel they could give

- F: What was it do you think that ? //
- P2: I was looking for help to erm .. to try and prosecute you see .. but they weren't there for that reason .. they were there for other reasons .. which I never realised at the time which meant I had to go it alone really
- F: Did you have any meetings with anyone there or ? //
- P2: I saw Mr H once or twice
- F: Did it .. did it help at all to talk about it ? //
- P2: It helped to talk about it yes hmm ... yes it helps to talk about it .. but as I say erm that feeling never leaves you .. it's just there all the time you erm .. you hope it never happens again but even now to this day I can't understand what provoked him to do what he did .. I never shall understand .. if he couldn't be treat - acted like an adult .. when he became an adult .. then .. you know what's the answer to that there is no answer is there ... I think some - some people they seem to erm .. think .. or take it into their mind that they can do whatever they choose .. you know and if you're erm .. but they never seem to do it er - now that is something .. he did it entirely on his own .. but a lot of violence today is done by say four or five onto one .. even on *The News* today it was the same thing .. five boys attacked one boy
- F: What do you think about that ?
- P2: Well there again to turns to cowardice doesn't it ... because that one boy might have been .. got one other boy you know off his erm [laughs] .. stroke like you know and erm .. defended himself
- F: Yes but when there's five of them
- P2: I don't think that erm .. you see you've got to be very careful I mean even though you're being careful I mean what would have happened if I'd have got up .. been in a position to get up immediately .. and then had attacked him ... and - my attack on him had I have been - stature and what have you .. had have been more serious than what he did to me .. I'd have been the perpetrator wouldn't I ... of the crime .. *not the original victim so .. it's* hard to erm say really as I say .. I think he - whether he had a row in the house .. that might have provoked him I don't know .. he could well have done .. you don't know these things do you ... it's always been the erm .. the big boy of the close you know one of these types like .. so I thought me being only like I was he .. you know he didn't see a problem with erm .. doing what he did .. but when it went on and he .. was taken to court then it put a different .. light on the subject ..
- F: Do you think erm people that do things like thi - do violent things to people .. are influenced at all by violence that's shown on television ?
- P2: Might well have been when he was younger .. I wouldn't have thought so at his age when he'd done what he did to me ... I wouldn't have thought that had had a factor with him .. no I just thought he was the type of boy that erm nobody told him what to do ... you know and nobody was trying to tell him what to do .. he was asked .. to be more considerate .. all those years before ... so obviously he must have held that grudge all that time .. I don't know
- F: Erm //
- P2: He must have thought I was a bit of a loser all that time [laughs]
- F: Yes .. I don't know .. what do you think about erm .. television .. do you think that there is a lot of violence on television or not .. what do you think ?
- P2: If you could have been sat in my lounge many times .. you would have heard me say .. the self same thing .. but television in my opinion .. is a terrible influence on .. children ... what happens on the - even simple things what is supposed to be erm ... you know animation and things like this you still get violence with animations .. which all turns to .. more violence .. I've seen a little boy the other - a few weeks ago .. he was laying hell into this other little boy .. as if it was accepted that he could do this now where's he learnt that from .. he's had to learn it off the TV hasn't he ... and he was giving him a karate kick and all this you know [laughs] well I mea - he's not learnt that at primary school has he [laughs] he's picked it up from the television yes I do think there's a lot - too much violence on the television
- F: What do you think about programmes that are more aimed at adult audiences do you think there's a lot of violence on those sort of programmes ?

P2: I do yes ... whether that's to do with my age or not I don't know whether .. I was brought up in an era where .. good storyline was the important thing .. and erm whatever was being shown same as a film films years ago used to have a story with them they don't have stories now do they

F: Do you watch a lot of films on television ?

P2: Some of the films yes

F: Yes what do you thi - //

P2: I'm not a big television person though .. I'm more news and .. things like that you see

F: Do you ever find yourself watching something on television and you think .. ooh that's violent .. you know ?

P2: Oh yes .. and I've got up and left it

F: What do you think about it when you see it ?

P2: I think it's disgusting .. to my mind anyway .. but then again I think I'm only a small .. er wheel in the machine .. that governs these things .. because erm I can't see the media or whatever .. or the broadcasters ever .. cutting these things down .. to the degree that they should be .. I think it's something that people erm .. even if - if they don't re-enact it it's something that they enjoy watching .. it isn't something I enjoy watching

F: Do you think that [clears her throat] there should be less violence on television ?

P2: Oh I think so yes .. hmm .. yes .. I might not be popular for saying that [laughs] but erm .. again in this day and age you - think it's an accepted thing isn't it .. which sadly is wrong .. and I think a lot of violence does come from the TV .. not in my case like but erm .. when you see a lot of these other things that take place you know the erm .. you see these robberies and things like that they're all re-enactment aren't they ...

F: Yes .. perhaps so

P2: When you look at it

F: Erm .. do you ever //

P2: I mean it's the same with joy riding in cars isn't it ..

F: In what way is it ?

P2: Well when you see these erm .. straight behind the wheel of a car it's absolutely magnificent isn't it .. do you see what I mean .. but they don't realise the danger that can cause .. it's more lethal than a gun at times .. is a car .. or can be

F: Do you think on television if erm ... if when there's a violent scene in a film or in a programme or whatever .. do you think if the consequences of that violence were actually shown .. do you think that would make a difference ?

P2: Er I'm not sure really what you mean about that

F: Erm .. because I think a lot of films at the moment are very .. what I call cartoon style violence very you know you see someone being shot but that's it and it moves on to the next thing .. do you think if //

P2: Oh yes if that's part of the storyline I suppose yes that's something you wouldn't sort of term as violence is it .. if you saw somebody getting shot erm .. although years ago there used to be such things as *Dillinger* and all that didn't there [laughs] where it was

F: [looks puzzled and laughs]

P2: Have you never heard of *Dillinger* ?

F: No

P2: You must ask somebody to show you a *Dillinger* film I mean the violence that erupted there .. all those years ago .. was still there on the television screens .. but I think in this day and age I mean in that day and age it was a film .. and once that film had been shown .. there was no consequences from it .. but I think today .. this violence does .. have consequences .. I don't know why .. but it does .. far more than it did years ago

F: Do you think that's perhaps just due to the amount of .. violence that's on TV now ? //

P2: No I think it's the way the erm .. society's changed .. to be quite honest .. I think society erm .. looks at violence in a very different .. way now .. in fact .. such as that *Dillinger* .. it wasn't violence then .. it wasn't termed as violence it was an American gangster you know .. and this er - seemed to be acceptable as the way gangsters were

F: So what kind of things did they do ?

P2: Well machine guns and all things like this you see but as I say once it was finished it was finished .. there was no re-enactment after ... but now you see when I saw that boy as I say giving that other lad a karate kick and all things this all these come from the TV ..

they've all modelled themselves .. on what they see don't they .. but they didn't years ago .. you didn't get boys running in the house years ago after seeing such as that .. and wanting a wooden machine gun you know [laughs] what I mean .. you didn't get that .. it was forgotten .. but it isn't now [laughs]

F: Do you think when you watch *The News* .. do you think erm there are .. they do show violence on *The News* sometimes ?

P2: Yes erm I know they warn people .. that erm you know something they are going to show is not erm .. is a bit out of line probably with the erm .. basic news and that but erm .. I suppose news is news but then again erm .. they show these .. sequels at a time when young children are about .. then erm .. I don't think it's a good thing

F: So showing .. say for instance what's happening in Albania at the moment .. do you think showing people with guns on the streets and things like that is wrong ? //

P2: Yes I do yes .. because erm .. thankfully it's not come to that in this country yet but erm .. what annoys me you see makes me very bitter .. there are people .. descendent from .. or even living here and possibly now having been descendent from families in this countries and living abroad and what have you .. th - promote this violence .. by virtue of the fact they're selling the guns anyway .. and making a profit from them ... and there are many many people doing that .. to me I can't erm .. I'm not a regular church goer but to me that's Christianity gone mad ... you know .. I know erm there's religious wars and things like this and what have you but erm .. no I think what's happening there .. is .. it's because someone wants it to happen .. it's something they're making money out of .. so where's the there's no democracy involved is there ... none whatever

F: So when you .. when you see violence on *The News* .. erm .. what do you think about - er what do you feel when you see violence on *The News* ?

P2: I think it's sad in as much as erm ... people have to do things like this .. instead of having a democratic way of doing it you know and erm .. only last - last week I was talking to a gentleman .. in town .. and we were saying then something that had happened within the government as regards taxes and things like this and I turned round to him and I says yes .. I said you get all this fighting and what have you in all these foreign countries .. I says but the people that are getting the money to put into those countries are living in London tax free .. they're not living in the country which they're supposed to be governing .. because it's too violent [laughs] it's crazy isn't it .. but this is happening .. I mean you take some of these states in Africa and places like that and erm I mean - the black Africans at the moment they've got a leader .. but what happens when Nelson Mandela .. you know goes away from the scene ... who's going to take over from him .. you're going to have all this violence back again ... these things just happen don't they ... but erm .. I suppose the Albanians really .. if somebody hadn't have took their money off them .. nobody takes kindly to - losing all their savings do they .. which is supposedly what happened .. so where in hell's name has that money gone [laughs] crazy isn't it .. //

F: Yes erm //

P2: You see if they'd have got their just rights even if it wasn't in a democratic way but in a financial way .. we'd have had none of that in Albania ... you might have had dissent against the president .. but nothing on the scale of what it's come to now ... because that's was civil war eventually wasn't it sadly .. then that pulls everybody else into the .. throw then doesn't it

F: In general then .. what are your opinions about violence .. how do you feel about violence ?

P2: I just wish there was a way where erm things could be done without it ... because erm at the end of the day violence doesn't help anybody does it ... it just erm .. destroys lives .. which is wrong really isn't it .. I mean it could have destroyed my life I was lucky ... but even so I mean erm .. it means I'm not living the life I erm .. worked ooh for fifty years before I retired erm .. and then erm .. you look forward to a decent retirement .. but all that .. ended with that you see .. so I just now live from day to day .. I mean I won't erm ... this has caused a bit of dissent in the house .. I don't like leaving the house unoccupied .. I wouldn't have thought twice .. before .. but now if there's somebody that would do something they know that there's nobody else about ... I don't know do I give them chance or do I erm .. plan our lives whereby erm .. where there always is somebody in the house .. I don't know [laughs]

F: What do you think when you're when you're thinking things like that not leaving the house unoccupied whatever .. what do you think about having to .. think about that ?

P2: It's very sad nowadays isn't it .. I mean I know someone who went out last week and they were only gone for twenty minutes and the whole house was ransacked .. you know it's .. so somebody must be watching ... but then again where do you move to //

F: Yes that's it

P2: I mean after that incident that happened to me somebody says to me .. why don't you move away and get out - move away whatever you see .. I said but why should I move away ... why should I disrupt my life ... you know I mean I'm quite happy living where I am .. alright .. I'm not er comfortable .. one hundred percent but I just have to try and put up with it that's all .. it's not easy at times .. so you're always watching your back you see [sighs] I'm very sympathetic to .. violence happening to anybody else ... having been through what I've been through I think I can qu - honestly say .. I have a reasonable understanding of what they might be going through ... as I said you can't understand until it has happened to you ... I know people try and be sympathetic but ..

F: Okay well if there's anything you want to add .. to what you've said

P2: Except as I say that erm .. I wish there was a way that could be found .. to cut all this violence out ... there doesn't seem to be .. I mean I even walked in - I was in town the other week .. and erm ... there were three youths walking towards me .. it didn't look as though they were going to move at all on the footpath .. you can imagine what went through my mind .. it didn't happen .. it was just me ... having that fear built into me now ... but erm .. then you pick *The Mercury* up the followiung night and you see it has happened .. [laughs] crazy isn't it .. and even to someone who's parked on their own .. that's why I always .. when I drive in the car I make sure the doors are locked all the way around

F: Yes I do [laughs]

P2: So I mean .. you've got to do this .. you only need to be stood a second don't you .. couple of minutes .. and somebody's got that door open before you can .. blink your eyes .. and they're looking for these opportunities you see ... but basically .. I've always felt that .. there would be none .. of this violence .. if everyone was occupied .. and had something to do .. I think the biggest cause of violence is unemployment ... and I don't think I'd be far wrong in saying that .. you see I'm always of the opinion and I quote this opinion many times .. in different converstaions .. if a man's got - or a youth has got something to do and he goes out to work in the morning he's too tired when he gets home at night to hurt anybody .. is he .. when I go from here now .. just look at the young people who'll be around this town ... nothing to do ... and I think .. this is the answer in my opinion to the ending of violence .. people being occupied in employment .. and sadly that'll never happen .. I can't see it ever doing anyway .. jobs for life have gone now I'm afraid ... and erm money then becomes the root of all evil doesn't it .. because without money .. you can't do anything .. I mean I've even been into a shop where - near where I live .. where I buy that paper .. and I saw the lady in there selling a young girl a cigarette ... and I said to her I says .. I can't believe what you've just done .. she says what .. I says sold her that cigarette .. and I says and you're prepared to lose all this shop for one cigarette what do you mean .. I says because I shall phone *Trading Standards* tomorrow ... you see I don't like to see these things happen .. and it's only the way I've been brought up ...

F: Okay well //

P2: All for money again you see

F: Yes .. right well thank you very much for your time

1.3 Example Transcript From An Inquiry Group

Below is an example of the transcripts obtained in the series of inquiry groups conducted in Study 3.

Transcript of Inquiry Group with FC2 (A female group who had watched *Natural Born Killers*)

Immediate Responses

- F: first of all .. any immediate responses to those three clips
P43: they're quite disturbing .. there sort of .. I don't know .. it just has a very disturbing impact .. I don't really know what to think about them at first erm ..
P42: I agree with Emma

First Scene

- F: okay .. let's talk about those three clips scene by scene .. so if we talk about the first first .. what did you think about the first clip
P45: there's a lot of animal imagery with it all and it's sort of like - it seems to me it's implying that .. ev - everyone's an animal therefore everyone must kill each other and .. they're killing other humans you know just because they can because it's human instinct it's not - er tut animal instinct .. like it's disturbing because humans are meant to be superior .. but at the end of the day
P44: that scene's more disturbing because you don't know anything about the characters because all you know is there is bad people out there shooting people killing people for the fun of it you don't know anything about their backgrounds like you find out later in the film her background and his background and what have you
P43: so it's hard to make an interpretation of what's going on in the film you sort of think right okay then [laughs] that's really interesting
P42: it's quite unrealistic as well .. the more you watch it the more you think yes they could do that but the first bit you don't know what it's about .. it wouldn't really happen
F: how would you describe the violence in the first scene
P43: there's quite a lot of it and it's sort of .. to an extreme .. and because you don't know anything about it you just think they're doing it for no point at all .. so you just think okay then .. they've just killed these people for no reason
P44: it's weird because .. they make her more violent than him .. although he kills more people she's the one doing all the hitting kicking throwing around breaking necks killing in the most painful way //
P42: you don't see his violence
P43: and you don't expect her to be the kind of person who could .. actually do that
P44: yes it is a bit unrealistic
P43: because she's so slight
P45: and also isn't it the only scene in the film .. basically they're just shooting everyone normally aren't they .. or is there .. they're not actually kicking and
P44: yes they don't generally like punch them they just kill them //
P42: you don't really see him killing anyone but I don't know like the bullet thing and the knife thing
P44: I thought that was really clever
P42: yes so I suppose there's a little bit of violence
P44: yes it sort of puts a soft touch on it the way they slow it down
P42: yes
P44: it makes it more comical
P45: yes it does .. well not comical but I know what you mean
P42: it's not serious

P45: it's a little bit cartoon - comical cartoony
P42: I felt sorry for that woman though
P44: woman
P42: the eeny meany miny mo thing
P44: it's child like isn't it
P42: I know but I felt right sorry for her I didn't want her to die
P44: it's the eeny meany mino mo thing isn't is the childness of it
P42: she is very childish isn't she
F: do you think the first scene gives much insight into what they characters are are going to be like
P43: yes because straight they're already being violent so you don't think they could possible be anything else because they're just so .. well just killing people straight from the beginning so you don't think they're capable of being normal kind of thing
P44: in a way it doesn't show what they're like .. it shows that they're violent and stuff like that but it doesn't show what their minds are like and how they work
P45: yes because when you find out why they're doing it you can see why they're like it - at first you just think they're just nu - well obviously they're nutters but you think they're just killing people for the fun of it whereas later on you can sort of say way because if all started off with her killing her father to get back so why they're doing it
P44: and also when he's in prison later on in the film he uses the tv interview to manipulate and .. he caused the riot and how clever he is in jail because he manages to cause a whole riot just through what he's saying it's not like he's just off his head and going round shooting people //
P45: and also when they killed the Indian and she's like really upset about it because he took them in and fed them and she's never had the security of that because she's always //
P44: well you don't get any of that in the first scene
P45: it shows the basic outline is violence
P42: you get the thing with the scorpion as well don't you .. like they're meant to be deadly killers and it just gets run over like that .. I felt sorry for it
F: how would you describe the first scene as a first scene in a film
P42: how do you mean
P43: it's full of action so it sort of sticks in your mind if someone said to you how does it begin you wouldn't say hm .. well it was a really show beginning so I don't actually remember what happened at the beginning of it
P44: it's just straight in there to the point .. there's none of this cushion soft we're going to show you her whole background
P45: yes like if it started with - when they show the tv showy type thing if they'd started with that //
P44: it would have been really soft impact building up it wouldn't have the same sort of feeling through the film .. because you'd constantly be thinking oh well she's only killing them because of that it's not really her fault whereas this you just think what the fuck's she doing [laughs] it good impact though
P42: it's really bright as well
F: bright
P42: yes things like the pie that he had bright green .. you wouldn't normally get that also when he were looking at that man and he had the image of him like dead .. that were horrible
P43: I think the black and white bit the way it flicks from black and white to colour .. when it's black and white it sort of more prominent and it's flicking from one thing to another basically just saying the same thing all the time
P42: they use black and white to flick back to the past
P43: but they did the bullet thing and the knife thing in black and white
P45: also with people talking .. it's most likely they're minds what's in their minds they're not people who are sort - obviously they're going to kill people - they have all that stuff going on in their minds but it's like //
P44: you're not just watching them are you .. you're in their with them
P45: it keeps flicking backwards and forwards it's really erratic

P43: when they're shooting people they do seem quite - despite the fact that they're killing people and they're clearly nutters they're actually quite complacent about it and sort of like affectionate to each other so you don't actually think they could actually do it because they still remain really calm placid sort of thing
P44: they're showing the animal instinct you've got killing on the one hand affection on the other you've got loyalty love
P45: when they're dancing together
P44: you've got happiness it's not basically put it on one aspect which is their killing instinct

Second Scene

F: what did you think about the second scene that you saw today
P43: that was in the house wasn't it
P44: when they killed the father
P45: oh right
P42: that was the first time she killed someone wasn't it
P44: think so yes
P45: at first she almost looks like .. what you doing I'm not sure you should be doing this
P43: when she heard the motorbike pull up outside she was just laying in bed and it was in black and white but she just had white on so she looked quite vulnerable .. so you sort of think then oh she's not going to do anything like that and when she goes downstairs she's still wearing the same things so you're not - she then gets into it and she quite excited about it - the fact that she's killed her Dad and by then you realise why she's done it .. but she does look quite vulnerable at first
P44: the way he comes through the door it's almost heroic style like he's saving her .. and it's alright to kill him because he's saving someone
P42: and she's not the slightest bit disturbed by it either is she she's like yes he's dead he's dead
P45: at first she seems to be a bit //
P43: at first she's sort of looking thinking
P42: I think she was checking to check that he was dead and then she was like yes let's go and kill my Mum
P44: no I mean when he first comes in the door
P45: and then the little boy at the end like it's a heroic thing .. it's like oh you're free now we've saved you
P44: we saved you Mickey saved me
P45: when they're killing the other people there's none of that in there is there there's no reason behind that is there that's when it goes off on a complete different level
P43: that little kid when he comes out of that room he's like dressed up as the devil isn't he .. or
P42: he's just a freak
P44: some freaky child
P42: probably to do with the way he's brought up though
P44: it's like it's supposed to be normal
P43: the see where she got her violence side from because her father was just sat there .. like watching okay it's only wrestling and it's not actually real but he was sort of getting really into it and you could see .. he's quite a violent man //
P44: her mother says earlier on something about him hitting her around or something as well
P43: yes so it's sort of .. okay not killing but she's used to sort of .. violence in the house hold
P45: yes it's everywhere so .. if she's doing it
P42: there's unnatural things as well like when he's - when he were grabbing her arse .. that time before it's not natural - what a normal Dad would do and a normal Mum wouldn't let just stand by and watch and a normal brother wouldn't have silly things painted on his face they're obviously used to like unnatural things
P43: a very strange family
P44: that's why they put it in a tv show style it's just completely exaggerated
P43: and it's not a normal tv family tv families all namby pamby we love each other
P44: two point four children all sit down to breakfast together

P42: the fact that they were laughing and clapping I found it a bit sick .. I didn't like that I thought that was very disturbing
P44: it's weird that they had people clapping
P43: it's like there was a camera and an audience behind them sort of watching it do you know what I mean
P44: yes it's just .. that's all linked in to when they were outside the prison saying murder me Mickey and .. all this appreciation of it it's quite weird

Third Scene

F: what about the third scene .. what did you think about that .. driving in the car to the garage
P43: I thought that was really weird
P42: there were scenes of violence around not just involving her but like generally .. killing that person on the street as though it's a normal occurrence it might be in America but to just like walk down the street and everyone's killing people around you //
P44: did you notice like throughout the whole film they had this tv screen behind them .. they had it in the motel as well in the window it was all like pictures and they had it when she was driving down the street as well
P43: was that the fire
P44: it was fire with killing people through it
P42: I didn't notice the killing people through it
P43: I didn't notice the killing people I just noticed firey bits
P44: it was like a war scene and they were killing people
P42: it's like - like a negative picture of a horse and they showed some of its body or something something inside
P44: that was weird they're actually trying to experience normality
P43: yes she was just driving along quite happily oblivious to whatever was going on around her
P44: also when she was shagging that bloke .. it's like she was just //
P45: all that stuff was flicking through her head wasn't it her Dad as well
P42: she was asking him - she was asking him like to say - she wanted to be appreciated because she didn't get it in her childhood that's what she was missing
P44: she was trying to be normal .. because Mickey didn't treat her like that either .. I mean you don't generally hold knives to people when you have sex with them unless you're well into the bondage thing .. [laughs] probably incriminate myself [pause] she's sees him as Mickey
P43: yes or that's how she wants him to be or something
P44: or how she wants Mickey to be
P45: also at the end when he realises who she is .. that's when she like snaps back in and kills him
P44: you are Mallory Knox
P43: she doesn't kill him though does she
P45: yes .. she shot him
P44: she shot him about five times
P42: it looked like she was shooting over there though and he were there
P43: I thought she was shooting the ground to scare him .. I don't know she killed him
P42: it didn't look like she was shooting at him but he fell on the floor but he didn't have any blood stains on him
P44: when they go to him later on he's got like five holes in him
P43: I didn't notice that nevermind [laughs]
P44: it's as soon as he says you're Mallory Knox .. she wants to kill him because //
P45: she's like escaped but he knows who she is so she's got to kill him
P43: she's got to keep up her image of who she is .. she doesn't want people to think she isn't going to kill people people expect her to kill so they're looking for her and stuff
P44: but she could have got away with it if he didn't know who she was she wouldn't have had to kill him .. even though she killed him no-one was there to say that she killed him
P43: you didn't expect .. at the beginning bit I didn't expect that she was going to kill him

P42: maybe it was like when he said you're Mallory Knox like God you're a renowned killer obviously he's not going to want to sleep with her then //

P44: I thought he was getting off on the idea

P42: he said you're Mallory Knox like [surprised scared voice] you know I'm going to get killed now

P45: it's like all that stuff when they go to the courtroom and they all go if I was going to be killed by anyone //

P44: I want to be killed by the Knoxes

P43: I thought it was //

P44: it's also out of context because they always leave one person alive

P42: but there were only one so they had to kill someone didn't they

P44: the only way they know it's her is through the DNA stuff on the car .. because it's out of context because they usually kill in mass areas and leave one person alive

P42: like erm .. that bloke that police man .. they didn't like check any DNA all he did were find some hair and the bum print oh it's Mallory Knox it could have been anyone doing that

P44: maybe she's got a distinct bum

P42: very thin

P44: it is slightly out of context though

P42: she seems very vulnerable even though she's a hardened killer

P44: she does look good with blond hair though

P43: when she's lying on the car she does .. she does look vulnerable though when she's just like going along the street she's just sort of sat there and it's going really slowly and she's just smoking a cigarette letting the world pass by

P44: she smokes her cigarette funny .. how much smoke can you let escape through one cigarette

Most Violent Scene

F: do you think of the three scenes you've seen there do you think you could choose one which is most violent

P43: I'd say the second one .. because it's like in her own home against her parents - fair enough her Dad's like a horrible person to her

P44: it's more meaningful violence

P43: yes .. and she seems to sort of .. not really think twice about it she does in the beginning but //

P42: yes but that's violence even though she's got a reason to do it even though it's in her own house whereas the first one she didn't really have a reason to kill anyone

P44: I'd still say the second one because the first one is the same as the third one it's cold blooded violence .. it's meaningless .. whereas the first one //

P42: the second one

P44: it has a meaning therefore it's more intense

P42: the second one

P44: that's what I meant

P45: the second one //

P42: there's a motive //

P45: so it's not quite as ..

P42: she's got a reason to kill them because they'd made her life hell whereas the people in the first one and the third one hadn't really done anything bad to them yet they thought they'd kill them anyway

P44: the second one's also more graphic

P43: most of it's in black and white

P44: it's in black and white it's more graphic because you get to see him being smacked in the head you get to see his head you get to see him when he's dead drowned in the fish tank you get to see the mother actually burned alive

P42: you don't see her being burned alive

P43: you can see the faces as well more .. you've got more look at their faces like her father looks completely and utterly distraught about it despite the fact //

P44: he's actually dead
P43: that he's actually what he's done and why she's doing it
P44: it's a more violent way of dying .. they're most violently killed - killed the most
P43: a more prolonged way of dying than just simply shooting them
P45: yes but the first one when they're - she's doing the eeny meany miny mo //
P42: yes that's drawing it out and playing with her
P45: but there's no reason why she should be killing that woman because she hasn't done anything to her .. otherwise you could say about the bloke he's coming on to her - not that she should kill him but there's
P42: they shot everybody around them most of them didn't have anything to do with them they were just there .. having like a cup of tea or something
P45: I'd say the first one for the violence
P42: but the knife and the bullet thing it's like it's chasing them so that's prolonging it as well
P45: it's because it's more meaningless that it's more violent
P44: it depends on how - your perspective on violence is it meaningful violence which is more violent or meaningless violence more violent .. killing for a cause or for a reason is that more violent than killing without a cause
P42: yes
P45: I'd say killing without a cause because they've done nothing
P42: there's no reason for it .. you've got to be more of a sicko to do that than - okay it's not nice to kill your own Mum and Dad but //
P45: but you can see why she's done that
P42: she's got a reason to do that because they've made her life hell whereas the others have done nothing to hurt them so they - there's no reason why they should do anything to hurt them
P43: I still think the second one
P44: it depends on your perspective of violence .. really

Portrayal of Violence

F: what did you think of the level of violence throughout the whole film
P43: quite high especially when there's like the riot in the jail
P44: I thought that was great
P42: they dragged it on a bit
P43: when they went in that room wherever they went and there was only a few of them when they went into that room they didn't seem to kill many people there was just that man hanging on the wall and the wall was just covered in blood it didn't seem there'd been anybody in that room before so you sort of wondered why it was covered in blood .. well I did anyway
P44: I felt a bit sorry for that television guy because he went absolutely mental it was so funny
P42: he's a bit of a prick though isn't he
P43: it sort of put like a light element into the film .. because he was such an idiot and so self obsessed
P42: they did drag it out an awful lot though I could have switched off after about two minutes of it it were about half an hour
P44: I enjoyed watching the jail scenes more I understood the jail scenes more
P43: I understood the first bit more than the bit when - in the jail
P44: the jail scenes were easier to understand I thought
P43: I was bamboozled for about half an hour
P44: I didn't like the Indian bit because of all the snakes .. I don't like snakes
P43: I thought the snakes were quite good because it was something that was actually getting at them and they couldn't do anything about it and .. they ended up having to go and get medicine and what have you they couldn't kill to stop them because they were just everywhere .. so they made them seem sort of .. fair enough they've just killed someone but they can't combat everything by killing

P42: it's like they're up against if they're meant to be natural born killers then snakes are also natural born killers and they're up against something like what they are only they can't do it as well because snakes are .. I don't know

P44: I didn't understand the Indian he said he knew his demon would be killing him for the last twenty years //

P42: Indians are spiritual aren't they

P44: it's weird how he put this spiritual context into this film about killing and then disappeared again

P42: they saw him as the demon though didn't they not her

P44: it was him that killed him

Identify with the Characters

F: erm .. do you think erm .. there's anything about Mickey and Mallory's characters that you can identify with in any way .. that you can relate to

P42: no

P43: no

P45: not really

P44: I'm thinking .. not with the because she's like //

P42: the fact that they miss each other

P44: they're so in love with each other as well

P43: but it's not in a normal lovely dovey way if you know what I mean

P42: oh no they are

P44: lovey dovey way doesn't just mean watching videos together or going to the cinema together

P43: I know I know I don't mean it like that

P44: they are .. they need each other

P43: yes

P44: you know it's the idea that everyone needs someone else .. their soul mate and they are soul mates .. which is one aspect of it .. but she's a complete ditz she really is she always comes across as as thick as two short planks

P42: but it's like before .. before she met him she were weak wasn't she because she couldn't stand up to her Mum and Dad but as soon as she met him it's like - he makes more powerful and make her realise that she can like do whatever she wants - well he starts it off and then she follows killing her Mum and Dad

P44: she always comes across as really thick until she like ends up in jail .. when that bloke's trying it on with her she's actually being clever about it

P43: yes

P42: it's - that girl the woman who plays her she always looks thick .. she always plays an airhead - an innocent air about her like she doesn't realise what she's doing

P44: the bits when she doesn't really know what she's doing or doesn't appear to she's always got blond hair

P43: hmm [43 has blond hair]

P44: she has .. she's got big blond hair and the next time you see her she's got short brown hair

P42: but she does all the kill - she does most of the killing when she's blond hair to try and make her more glamorous do you know what I mean to put some glamour to it like you know Bonnie and Clyde style killing //

P44: but it's also when she appears thick as well

Real Life

F: do you think there's any of the violence do you think could be related to anything you've heard happen in real life

P42: the gun thing in America .. the shootings in school things like that .. just like mass //

P43: Dunblane or whatever //

P42: killing for no reason

P44: they're just killing those people just because they can

P42: and you often hear of people who kill their Mum and Dad
P44: also the erm when they try and erm .. get him on tv .. it's like because nowadays all these mass murderers you get their trials on tv don't you and you get to like see these paedophiles being released into so and so let's follow him for a week and see what he does it's like shock tv has taken over like those fly on the wall things
P42: yes and the riots in the jails .. it's quite scary that because if you think about it they could do that any time and they wouldn't have enough people to control it
P44: it was also quite scary to see that tv person turn .. one moment he's the high executive person normal average wife having a bit on the side .. quite happy with his life the next moment he's killing people
P45: and the policeman as well
P44: yes shady cop
P43: I didn't like him
P44: he killed the prostitute
P42: that could be a sexual thing
P44: could be
P42: it could have been a fantasy he had

[pause]

P44: it's a bit weird a policeman that kills
P43: it's got twists on everything hasn't it
P44: everything normal gets twisted

The Film's Message

F: did you think the film had a message that it was trying to get across
P42: we were discussing this weren't we about whether it's to do with violence on tv with the shots in the background like - in the window in the motel and that
P44: an attack on tv
P42: an attack on the content of tv programmes
P44: every man has it in him to kill and .. that sort of thing
P43: it's like what you were saying about they're on a par with animals at some point and animals can kill and the fact humans are animal means they can kill as well
P44: we are no better than animals
P42: but animals know no better .. whereas we're meant to be educated
P45: which makes it .. worse //
P44: worse .. the bubble gum ending says it all when they drive off in the camper van with their three kids or whatever
P42: yes .. yes .. the thought that people like that could get away with it
P44: well no I don't know whether it was like that they could get away with or whether it was like the fact that so many things like in the film were tv and they always seem to have that unrealistic happy ending
P43: they just seemed to get away with it though .. if they've just continued from what they were doing to just having a completely normal life having children and driving around the country or whatever
P44: that could be reinforcing the fact that it's within every normal human being .. any mister and misses average in their camper van with their three kids could have been killers
P42: yes that's true
P44: or have the potential to kill

F: did you come to any conclusions about what the message was in the film
P44: we just argued about it
P42: you know the - like - I don't know whether it was before the film came out or not but they were doing reports about whether people are naturally evil or not .. it's a bad gene or something people are born naturally evil
P43: I don't think you can really draw a conclusion from it .. because it's got lots of so many different like bits - aspects to it it's quite hard to say oh it's trying to say this

P44: the moral of the story is
P42: no
P44: there's either lots or none sort of thing
P42: or the fact that these people are like that are usually from a disturbed background I don't know .. abusive childhoods .. because it could - the fact it relate - like that third scene when she was with that bloke and it flicked back to like - innocent sort of erm .. vulnerable face and the evil face of the Dad and what they do it down the fact of what happened in their childhood
P44: it's sort of saying we're not responsible for own actions .. yet we're supposed to be responsible for own actions
P42: mm .. saying that like killers and things have psychological problems .. deep down psychological problems .. and that - because they're not just erm .. cold blooded killers in a way .. even though they do kill people cold blooded they are disturbed through something else .. it's not like they've had a lovely happy upbringing and everything and they ooh you know we'll kill people .. they've obviously had an unhappy life

F: do you think the violence in the film was acceptable or unacceptable
P42: unacceptable
P43: I thought some of it - well too much of it really
P45: I don't know that's what the film was //
P43: I know that's what the film was about but I thought
P42: there's more violent ones .. there's definitely more violent films about than that it's just that's violent in kind of a disturbing way
P44: it's violent in a psychological way you don't see people .. guts being ripped out //
P42: but you know it's going on
P44: and arms begin blown off and that sort of thing it's more psychological violence .. like you see blood splattered on the wall therefore you know his brains have been blown out but you don't actually see it
P43: didn't they kill that guy in the chemist
P44: yes
P43: they did it twice didn't they when there was no
P44: you didn't see him being shot you just see blood on the wall and then
P43: so they did it twice when they didn't leave somebody behind
P42: yes but //
P44: the police were all there outside .. so I think it's quite acceptable .. if it's an eighteen it is

F: were there any bits in the film that you thought were .. were there any bits in the film that you really didn't like any bits in the film that you really didn't like
P42: the house scene where her Dad's trying it on saying go upstairs and I'll be up to see to you in a bit ugh
P45: and the way they .. the context they put it in with everyone clapping and laughing
P44: it was horrible
P42: it obviously does happen in some houses but it made me feel sick .. if I'd have been watching it through choice I probably would have turned it off then
P44: I didn't like the snake scene but that's out of personal choice because I've got a phobia against snakes .. the lecherous Dad was probably the worst bit

F: were there any bits that you really did like
P43: I thought it was quite clever .. the way they just it was all put together
P42: I liked the bit when they got bit by the snakes because I thought they were going to die
P44: I liked the bit when the tv guy was becoming *Rambo* I thought that was really good just to see him turn .. it was quite funny the way they did it
P43: it shows that they made it quite [indecipherable word]
P42: I was glad - you know when that policeman tried it on with her I was glad in a way that she got him back for it even though you don't want to think about that that made me cringe as well
P44: for their own good

Comparison to Other Films

- F: are there any other films that you think *Natural Born Killers* fits in the same kind of pigeon as .. are there any other films that you think it's the same kind of film as //
- P45: I think //
- P42: in content or in style
- F: whatever
- P45: in style things like what were we saying //
- P42: *Trainspotting Pulp Fiction*
- P45: *Pulp Fiction* and things like that what is it you say postmodern
- P42: yes surreal arty farty stuff
- P45: that sort of thing where it's all //
- P42: you've got to find the meaning it in from what's going on around .. very surreal
- P44: it's like a modern version of his Vietnam war films because that - in *Full Metal Jacket* they all become immersed in the psychological side of it and that's how they become killers .. in *Full Metal Jacket* it's like how they brainwash them psychologically to become killers .. these are normal little boys who go into army school and they're brainwashed to become killers and it's like they're psychologically .. transformed into killers through their childhood .. so in a way it's a bit like a modern twist on those
- P42: I've not seen that many violent films
- P43: no I haven't seen a huge horrendous amount of violent films
- P42: because it's not the normal kind of film I'd watch so I wouldn't really have watched any others like it
- P45: *Reservoir Dogs* is quite violent as well
- P42: I haven't seen that
- P44: I saw a bit of it
- P45: there's something else but I can't think of it's name but it was really violent
- P42: *Pulp Fiction* was quite .. violent
- P44: it's the same sort of style isn't it
- F: did you enjoy the film
- P45: yes
- P44: yes
- P43: yes
- P42: no I didn't like it
- P44: to be honest with you I was surprised
- P43: yes I was surprised I liked it
- P45: yes I wouldn't go
- P44: I wouldn't have gone and chosen it out of the video shop or anything
- P43: Mike told me I wouldn't like it
- P42: I wouldn't have watched the whole of it at all .. I probably watched past the bit at the beginning when the credits come and then he's dead and going back in circles
- F: does anyone want to say anymore about it .. are there any burning issues we haven't covered
- all: no

Appendix 2

Study 1a: Experiencing Violence Questionnaire

2.1 Experiences of Violence Questionnaire

The questionnaire overleaf was distributed to prospective participants through Leicester Victims of Crime Support Scheme and De Montfort University's Faculty of Health and Community Studies. It is reproduced verbatim except that a smaller font has been used.

EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Distributed by Rachel Shaw BSc
De Montfort University

This questionnaire is completely confidential. It aims to discover how any experiences of violence may have influenced your life, and your opinions and attitudes toward violence both in society and in the media. The information collected through this questionnaire will aid my research which I intend to use as part of my PhD thesis.

Section A: You own experience of violence

Answer the following "Yes" or "No" questions and then, if requested, expand this answer using your own words.

1) Have you ever witnessed a violent event? (If your answer is No , go straight to Section B)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
a) Briefly describe what happened. (If you have witnessed more than one violent event, choose the most recent and answer the questions with that one instance in mind).	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
b) How did you feel when you realised what was happening?	
<hr/> <hr/>	
c) What kind of emotions ran through you as you watched what happened?	
<hr/> <hr/>	
d) How did you feel after it had happened?	
<hr/> <hr/>	
2) Has your experience affected the way you behave now? If so, in what way?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/> <hr/>	
3) Has this experience influenced the way you think about people? If so, in what way?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/> <hr/>	

Section A: (cont.)

- 4) Has this experience affected the decisions you have to make in your life? Yes ☐ No ☐
If so, in what way?

- 5) Has your experience changed your attitude toward violence? Yes ☐ No ☐
If so, how has your attitude changed?

- 6) Do you feel the same way now when you are witness to a set of circumstances that you think may lead to violence? Yes ☐ No ☐
If not, how have your feelings changed?

Section B: Your opinions about violence

- 1) Consider the questions below and answer by ticking either "Yes" or "No".

- a) Is a violent person a powerful person? Yes ☐ No ☐
b) Can a person be violent when they are alone? Yes ☐ No ☐
c) Can watching a film be violent? Yes ☐ No ☐
d) Can words be violent? Yes ☐ No ☐
e) Can watching a football match be violent? Yes ☐ No ☐
f) Is taking part in a boxing match violent? Yes ☐ No ☐
g) Does violence have to involve physical actions? Yes ☐ No ☐
h) Must violence end in physical injury? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 2) Look at the following pairs of actions and tick the option you consider to be more violent.

- a) ☐ punching someone in the gut
☐ kicking someone in the head
b) ☐ hitting someone in the chest
☐ holding a knife to someone's throat in a threatening manner
c) ☐ throwing a chair at someone
☐ breaking a glass bottle over someone's head
d) ☐ slashing someone's face with a knife
☐ holding a loaded gun to someone's head

Section B: (cont.)

- e) ☐ stabbing someone in the chest several times
☐ holding someone's head under water so they cannot breathe
- f) ☐ shooting someone dead
☐ cutting someone's head off with a sword

Section C: Your opinions about violence in the media

Answer the following "Yes" or "No" questions and then, if requested, expand this answer using your own words.

1) Do you watch television for entertainment? Yes ☐ No ☐ (If No, go straight to **Question 4**)

2) Do you watch any programmes on TV that you believe are violent? Yes ☐ No ☐
If so, give some examples

3) Do you enjoy any of the programmes you have mentioned above? Yes ☐ No ☐
a) If so, explain what it is you like about these programmes.

b) How do you feel when you see violent scenes in these programmes?

4) Do you regularly go to the cinema or hire videos to watch at home? Yes ☐ No ☐
a) If so, what kinds of films do you like to watch?

b) What do you enjoy about these films?

5) Do you find that the films you choose include scenes that are violent? Yes ☐ No ☐
If so, how do you feel when you see a violent scene on your chosen film?

6) Do you purposely avoid films that are violent? Yes ☐ No ☐
If so, what do you dislike about them?

7) Do you particularly like films that include violence? Yes ☐ No ☐
If so, what do you enjoy about them?

Section C: (cont.)

- 8) Do you think films are more violent in the cinema, or on video, than on television? Yes ☐ No ☐
If so, why do you think this?

- 9) Do you think violent films are a healthy part of society that should remain? Yes ☐ No ☐
If so, please explain why.

- 10) Do you think there are too many violent films? Yes ☐ No ☐
If so, what do you think should be done about it?

Section D: About you

Age: ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ over 65

Sex: ☐ Female ☐ Male

Employment: _____

Marital Status: _____

If you have found this questionnaire interesting and feel you may be able to contribute further there is an invitation to come to talk about this subject in more detail in an informal interview. Enclosed is a reply slip which you may fill in and send back, either with the questionnaire, or in a separate envelope, if you so wish.

☐ Reply Slip enclosed

☐ Reply Slip returned separately

Please return this questionnaire in the envelope provided to:

Rachel Shaw. Department of Human Communication, De Montfort University, Scraptoft
Campus, Leicester. LE7 9SU.

Thank you very much

2.2 Reply Slip for the Experience of Violence Questionnaire

Below is the reply slip which was distributed along with the questionnaire to each prospective participant.

REPLY SLIP	
<i>Experience of Violence Questionnaire</i>	
Please complete this reply slip and send it in the envelope provided to:	
<i>Rachel Shaw. Department of Human Communication, De Montfort University, Scaptoft Campus, Scaptoft, Leicester. LE7 9SU.</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> I would like to help further with this research and come for an interview.	
Name: _____	
Signed: _____	Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Please contact me at:	
Address: _____	
_____ Tel.: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Or, please contact me through: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Send me _____ further copies of the questionnaire at the above address.	

2.3 Researcher's Covering Letter to LVCSS clients

The following letter was sent to prospective participants via Leicester Victims of Crime Support Scheme (LVCSS).

Rachel Shaw
Department of Human Communication
De Montfort University
Scraptoft Campus
Scraptoft
Leicester.
LE7 9SU.
0116 255 1551 ext. 8755.

14th January 1997

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Rachel Shaw, I am a research student at De Montfort University. My research is inspired by the growing dominance of violence in our culture. Violence is broadcast on television and is depicted in films more and more. My aim is to come to understand peoples' experiences of violence, be it real or dramatised, in as much depth as possible.

In order to help me to understand all the faces of violence both in real life and in film, I am asking people like yourself, who have had a personal experience of violence, if they would be prepared to help me with my research. This will help our understanding both of violence as a personal experience and the trauma it can cause to the victim.

I would be extremely grateful if you would consider helping me with my research, but stress that you are **under no obligation** to do so. I have devised a **confidential** questionnaire, enclosed, which asks general questions about your own opinions and experiences of violence. If you decide to fill in the questionnaire you can return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided.

At the end of the questionnaire you will see an invitation to come for an informal interview. If you wish to help by talking to me about your experiences, whether or not you have completed the questionnaire, please complete and send back the reply slip enclosed. If you know of anyone else who may like to fill in a questionnaire please indicate how many further copies you require on the reply slip or telephone the above number during office hours.

The interview will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will be recorded on audio-cassette for later analysis. **You will not be identified in any way** and I hope to keep the interview as informal as possible. I will contact you at a later date to arrange the time and place of the interview.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Rachel Shaw.

2.4 Leicester Victims of Crime Support Scheme's Letter to Clients

The letter below is that sent by LVCSS to their clients.

**Leicester Victims of Crime Support Scheme,
3rd Floor, Market Centre Offices,
11 Market Place, The Jetty,
Leicester, LE1 5GG.
Tel/Fax: 0116 253 0101
Reg charity No. 511610**

14th January 1997

Ref: 10.4 (JMcC/Shaw)

Dear [client's name]

I am writing to you as a victim of a violent crime in 1995 to ask whether you might be willing to take part in a research project on violence.

The project has been set up to explore why something so unacceptable in practice as violence should be found by so many to be acceptable as entertainment in films and on television.

The research is designed to gain improved understanding about the ways in which people experience violence. The research is being supervised by Dr David Hiles, a lecturer at De Montfort University with whom we have worked extensively developing counselling skills.

I attach a copy of a letter from Rachel Shaw, the research student working on the project, which explains more about the research, and a copy of the questionnaire that she has prepared, which you might be interested to complete.

No details about you, or your case, have been passed on to her. If you do wish to complete the questionnaire, you might be interested to take part in a more in-depth interview with Rachel. If so, please complete the reply slip enclosed with the questionnaire.

Please feel under no compulsion to complete the questionnaire, but a stamped addressed envelope is provided in which to return it if you are willing to do so. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to ring me on the above number in office hours.

Yours sincerely,

Jim McCallum
Senior Co-ordinator.

2.5 Researcher's Covering Letter to De Montfort University Staff and Students

The letter below was distributed via the secretaries' office in the Department of Human Communication to administrative staff and students.

Department of Human Communication
De Montfort University
Scraptoft Campus
Scraptoft
Leicester.
LE7 9SU.
0116 255 1551 ext. 8755.

14th January 1997

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Rachel Shaw, I am a research student at De Montfort University. My research is inspired by the growing dominance of violence in our culture. Violence is broadcast on television and is depicted in films more and more. My aim is to come to understand peoples' experiences of violence, be it real or dramatised, in as much depth as possible.

In order to help me to understand all the faces of violence both in real life and in film, I am asking people like yourself if they would be prepared to help me with my research.

I would be extremely grateful if you would consider helping me with my research, but stress that you are **under no obligation** to do so. I have devised a **confidential** questionnaire, enclosed, which asks general questions about your own opinions and experiences of violence. If you decide to fill in the questionnaire you can return it by post in the envelope provided to the above address, or to the secretaries' office in the Department of Human Communication, Scraptoft, or simply put it in my pigeon hole in the Department of Human Communication.

At the end of the questionnaire you will see an invitation to come for an informal interview. If you wish to help by talking to me about your experiences, whether or not you have completed the questionnaire, please complete and send back the reply slip enclosed. If you know of anyone else who may like to fill in a questionnaire please indicate how many further copies you require on the reply slip, telephone the above number during office hours, or call in to my office at Scraptoft, Room 0.173.

The interview will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will be recorded on audio-cassette for later analysis. **You will not be identified in any way** and I hope to keep the interview as informal as possible. I will contact you at a later date to arrange the time and place of the interview.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Rachel Shaw.

2.6 Participant Sample

The table below depicts the personal information of those who took part in Study 1a in the form of answers to *Section D: About you* of the questionnaire.

P	SEX	AGE	Employment	Marital Status
1	M	18-25	Unemployed - on the sick due to violence	Engaged
2	M	65+	Retired	Married
3	F	18-25	Field Sales Rep	Single
4	F	36-45	Student	Divorced
5		65+	Retired Police Officer	Single
6	F	18-25	Administrator	Single
7	M	18-25	Student	Single
8	M	36-45	Driving Examiner	Live with partner
9	M	26-35	Student	Single
10	M	26-35	Student	Single
11	F	36-45	Student	Separated
12	F	26-35	Student	Single
13	M	26-35	Student	Single
14	M	26-35	Local Government Officer	Single
15	M	18-25	Teacher	Single
16	M	26-35	Clinical Officer	Single
17	F	26-35	Yes	Single (Engaged)
18	F		Secretary	
19	F	18-26	Unemployed	Single
20	F	18-25	Recruitment Consultant	Single
21	F	18-25	Primary Teacher	Single - living with partner
22	M	26-35	Printer	Single
23	M	46-55	Minister of Religion	Married
24	F	56-65	Retired	Married
25	M	18-25	Student	Single
26	F	18-25	Media/ fashion student	Single

2.7 Questionnaire Scripts

Below are participants' questionnaire scripts. They are presented in question order according to the questionnaire in Appendix 2.1 and all participants' responses are given in turn for each question. Answers to those questions which required participants to describe events or feelings in their own words are reproduced verbatim.

Section A: Your own experience of violence

- 1) *Have you ever witnessed a violent event? (Yes/No)*
How did you feel when you realised what was happening?
What kind of emotions ran through you as you watched what happened?
How did you feel after it happened?

- P1 Yes
A gang of youths (aged 16+) decided to have fun by beating up a young innocent boy aged about 10 which I found sick
Mad, so I interrupted which wasn't too bright
Sad for the boy and it recalled all what happened to me
Shaky and scared
- P2
- P3 Yes
I was stopped in the street and confronted by a man who said he was going to kill me.
He held on to me and told me explicitly what he was going to do
Shocked as I had always felt very safe walking on my own
Sickened by what happened
- P4 Yes
I had a gun held at my head by someone I cared about and trusted
Total blind panic
Fear, disbelief
Physically ill and very shaky emotionally
- P5 Yes
Seeing Muslim youths assaulting a white youth
Disgusted
Anger
Angry
- P6 No
- P7 Yes
A gang beating a person outside a nightclub, using clubs and stones
Angry, defensive, apprehensive
As above
Still annoyed, relieved
- P8 Yes
I have witnessed several acts of violence whilst being a policeman, and was once beaten up after a football match as a 15 year old (that had much more of an effect than witnessing violence). As a policeman I witnessed a road traffic accident where one

driver got out of his car and chased the other driver. The one chasing smashed a shop window, grabbing a chisel, caught up with the other man and stabbed him in the hand. Disbelief as there was hardly any damage to either car. This was back in 1973 so I suppose it was an early example of road rage.
Helpless as I was too far away to stop it from happening.
Anger, as it was all so pointless - being such a trivial thing

- P9 Yes
A drunken man made eye contact with another in a pub. The other man the grabbed the drunk and picked up a large wooden stool, he then slowly raised the stool above the drunk and smashed the stool over his head breaking both head and stool - blood everywhere - the other man carried on drinking his pint
Shocked - (especially since the offender was much bigger in build) and also because he showed no emotion as he carefully broke the other's skull
As above. I didn't really have time to assess my emotions at the time - I looked on in disbelief
Sick (his blood was over my jacket) angry at the landlord for not getting the man arrested
- P10 Yes
I was attacked at night whilst sitting in my car. The side window was smashed with a baseball bat
Slightly shocked, disbelief
Fear. A desire to remove myself from the scene and a surprising level of self control
Small and powerless
- P11 Yes
Domestic violence cause by my wife being an alcoholic. Verbal abuse, threatening behaviour, smashing the TV, furniture, plate etc., in front of me
Terrified
Shock, horror, resentment
Exhausted and fragile
- P12 Yes
The most recent event that comes to mind is a scene from *Reservoir Dogs* where the tough guy cuts slices off the under-cover policeman
Absolute dread
Frustration, disgust, sadness
Isolated - people were seated in the cinema enjoying this spectacle
- P13 Yes
Several people involved in fighting. One man punched to the ground and several kicking him in the body and head
Nauseous
Fear, hate, lack of comprehension as to why it was necessary
Shaken, still nauseous
- P14 Yes
On Saturday, 15th February 1997 I was on the bus at 5.15pm travelling down Oxford Road, Manchester having just been at the City v Middlesbrough match at Maine Road. Looking outside the window, I saw a gang of approximately 20 lads set upon 1 fan from the opposing club. The individual was punched a couple of times in the face and fell over as a result
Concern and regret
First emotion was hoping it wasn't a City fan which had been assaulted - second emotion - generally unhappy on the event
Nothing

- P15 Yes
Fight involving a knife in a pub car park
I felt as if I had to stop what was happening before it got any worse
Angry that two friends could put each other and other friends through what they were doing
Pissed off, and sad for the two people involved
- P16 No
- P17 Yes
A man was hitting/punching/kicking a woman in a car park. Screams were heard and foul language and insults
Sick (physically), anxiety for the woman sorry for the woman
As above, disgusted - stayed with me for a few days after
- P19 No
- P20 Yes
After verbal taunting, my boyfriend and the person who was taunting him started fighting. (The person knew my boyfriend's uncle who is 'slow' - he started taking the mickey out of him)
Terrified that my boyfriend would get hurt
Sheer dread as what would happen but anger at the person who started teasing my boyfriend's uncle
Very upset and angry that it had happened
- P21 No
- P22 Yes
It happened in Leicester, at night time and was between some youths who appeared to have been drinking. They began shouting at each other and ended up fighting.
To be honest not shocked but a bit sad, because I was attacked in the town when I was younger so I know how it feels
It brought back memories and made me realise that it can happen to anybody
A bit numb because in those situations sometimes there is nothing you can do
- P23 No
- P24 Yes
A man punching and kicking a woman in the street. Other people surrounding them and watching. No-one tried to stop it. Eventually police arrived
Surprised at the violence and the fact that no-one tried to stop it
Sadness at the lack of control
Glad the police arrived to stop it
- P25 No
- P26 Yes
Two men fighting in a club near where I was standing with friends. The men threw several punches at each other causing damage, then the fight was broken up
Scared, because it was so close, concerned for the man getting hurt
Fear, worry, upset
Angry that it occurred but thankful that it was over and no innocent person was hurt

2) *Has your experience affected the way you behave now? (Yes/No)*

- P1 Yes
I have had to go on anti-depressants

- P2
- P3 Yes
Will not go anywhere on my own i.e. walk to shops at night
- P4 Yes
This is one of many experiences of violence that I have had. I am terrified of being left on my own and will not go out
- P5 Yes
More wary
- P6
- P7 No
- P8 Yes
Don't be complacent when dealing with people
- P9 No
- P10 No
- P11 Yes
I protect myself mentally and spiritually and leave any situation that is uncomfortable
- P12 Yes
Trying to make myself less sensitive to this type of popular viewing
- P13 No
- P14 No
- P15 No
- P16
- P17 No
- P19
- P20 No
- P21
- P22 Yes
I am more aware of what or who is around me when I am out, sometimes I feel a bit intimidated
- P23
- P24 No
- P25
- P26 No
I usually walk away when fights break out

3) *Has this experience influenced the way you think about people? (Yes/No)*

- P1 Yes
 I don't trust anybody
- P2
- P3 Yes
 Very wary, quite paranoid
- P4 No
- P5 Yes
 I'm now unable to feel comfortable in the company of Asians
- P6
- P7 No
- P8 Yes
 It has shown that people can lose reason over things that you would count as trivial
- P9 No
- P10 Yes
 Far more cautious and suspicious of others' motives in certain situations
- P11 Yes
 Lack of trust
- P12 Yes
 Why is it that some people can sit and watch such sadism and bloodshed and really enjoy it?
- P13 No
- P14 No
- P15 No
- P16
- P17 Yes
 How people can be so cruel and must be angry or distressed themselves
- P19
- P20 No
- P21
- P22 Not really because you can't judge people on the minority who act in this way
- P23
- P24 No

P25

P26 Yes
It is upsetting to see people wanting to hurt one another using violence

4) *Has this experience affected the decisions you have to make in your life? (Yes/No)*

P1 No

P2

P3 Yes
I'm not as outgoing and carefree

P4 Yes
It has restricted my lifestyle and made me very nervous

P5 Yes
Avoid Asians where possible

P6

P7 No
P8 Yes
Only in the sense of knowing that different situations can affect two people differently

P9 Yes
Not to work in *pubs or other places where confronted with this type of behaviour*

P10 No

P11 Yes
Have decided to live life on my own terms. Would rather be without a relationship than in an abusive one

P12 Yes
I try to be less scared and more assertive in my life in general

P13 No

P14 No

P15 No

P16

P17 Yes
Have seen violence in my family and handle situation differently

P19

P20 No

P21

P22 No

P23

P24 No

P25

P26 No

5) *Has your experience changed your attitude toward violence? (Yes/No)*

P1 Yes
I am so against it

P2

P3 Yes
It makes me very anxious, even to hear an argument

P4 No

P5 Yes
I used to think Asians were quiet people

P6

P7 No

P8 Yes
I'm not really sure it has changed my attitude, as I have always been easy going and would not get involved in violence unless necessary

P9 No

P10 No

P11 Yes
I loath violence, especially mental abuse

P12 Yes
I'm less emotionally 'dragged down' by it and can distance myself more than before

P13 No

P14 No

P15 No

P16

P17 Yes
More ways for people to control it, they should seek help

P19

P20 No

P21

P22

My attitude will always be the same toward violence, it doesn't solve anything and it's usually weak people on a power trip

P23

P24 No

P25

P26 No

6) *Do you feel the same way now when you are a witness to a set of circumstances that you think may lead to violence? (Yes/No)*

P1 Yes

P2

P3 Yes

P4 Yes

P5 Yes

P6

P7 No

P8 No
I am able to see the signs much earlier and will endeavour to do everything to calm the situation

P9 Yes

P10 No

P11 No
Instead of attempting to calm the situation, I leave

P12 Yes

P13 Yes

P14 Yes

P15 Yes

P16

P17 Yes

P19

P20 Yes

P21

P22

It depends what the circumstances are and how they affect me

P23

P24 Yes

P25

P26 Yes

Section B: Your opinions about violence

(Yes = Y; No = N; Not answered = n/a; Not sure = ?)

Question	P1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
a) Is a violent person a powerful person?	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	?	N	N
b) Can a person be violent when they are alone?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
c) Can watching a film be violent?	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N
d) Can words be violent?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
e) Can watching a football match be violent?	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
f) Is taking part in a boxing match violent?	Y	N	Y	Y	N	?	Y	Y	N	Y
g) Does violence have to involve physical actions?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
h) Must violence end in physical injury?	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Question	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
a) Is a violent person a powerful person?	N	Y	N	n/a	N	Y	N	n/a	Y	N
b) Can a person be violent when they are alone?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	n/a	N	Y
c) Can watching a film be violent?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	n/a	N	N
d) Can words be violent?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a	Y	Y
e) Can watching a football match be violent?	Y	Y	?	Y	Y	Y	N	n/a	N	Y
f) Is taking part in a boxing match violent?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a	Y	N
g) Does violence have to involve physical actions?	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	n/a	Y	Y
h) Must violence end in physical injury?	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	n/a	N	N

Question	21	22	23	24	25	26
a) Is a violent person a powerful person?	Y	N	N	N	N	Y
b) Can a person be violent when they are alone?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
c) Can watching a film be violent?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
d) Can words be violent?	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
e) Can watching a football match be violent?	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N
f) Is taking part in a boxing match violent?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
g) Does violence have to involve physical actions?	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
h) Must violence end in physical injury?	N	N	N	N	Y	N

Section B : Your opinions about violence (cont.) (option chosen = x)

Option	P1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
punching someone in the head						x				
kicking someone in the head	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
hitting someone in the chest with a base ball bat	x	x		x			x		x	x
holding a knife to someone's throat in a threatening manner	x		x		x	x		x		
throwing a chair at someone	x									x
breaking a glass over someone's head	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
slashing someone's face with a knife	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x
holding a loaded gun to someone's head	x		x					x		
stabbing someone in the chest several times	x	x		x		x	x		x	x
holding someone's head under water so they cannot breathe	x		x		x			x		
shooting someone dead in the chest	x									
cutting off someone's head with a sword	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Option	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
punching someone in the head										
kicking someone in the head	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
hitting someone in the chest with a base ball bat									x	
holding a knife to someone's throat in a threatening manner	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
throwing a chair at someone			x							
breaking a glass over someone's head	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x
slashing someone's face with a knife				x		x	x			x
holding a loaded gun to someone's head	x	x	x		x				x	
stabbing someone in the chest several times				x	x	x	x		x	x
holding someone's head under water so they cannot breathe	x	x	x				x			
shooting someone dead in the chest				x			x			
cutting off someone's head with a sword	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x

Option	21	22	23	24	25	26
punching someone in the head						
kicking someone in the head	x	x	x	x	x	x
hitting someone in the chest with a base ball bat		x			x	x
holding a knife to someone's throat in a threatening manner	x		x	x		x
throwing a chair at someone						
breaking a glass over someone's head	x	x	x	x	x	x
slashing someone's face with a knife	x	x	x		x	x
holding a loaded gun to someone's head				x		
stabbing someone in the chest several times	x	x			x	x
holding someone's head under water so they cannot breathe			x	x		
shooting someone dead in the chest						
cutting off someone's head with a sword	x	x	x	x	x	x

Section C: Your opinions about violence in the media

1) Do you watch television for entertainment? (Yes/No)

P1 Yes

P2 Yes

P3 Yes

P4 Yes

P5 Yes

P6 Yes

P7 Yes

P8 Yes

P9 Yes

P10 Yes
P11 Yes
P12 Yes
P13 No
P14 Yes
P15 No
P16 Yes
P17 Yes
P19 Yes
P20 Yes
P21 Yes
P22 Yes
P23 Yes
P24 Yes
P25 Yes
P26 Yes

2) *Do you watch any programmes on TV that you believe are violent? (Yes/No)*

P1 No
Because they are not real it's only actors
P2 No
P3 Yes
The X Files, The Bill, EastEnders
P4 Yes
Some action movies such as war films etc.
P5 Yes
Animal Hospital
P6 No
P7 Yes
Films mainly
P8 Yes
Taggart, films such as *Fatal Attraction*
P9 Yes

Films - *Carlitto's Way* (if these don't count) then I don't really watch things that are violent for the purpose of violence

P10 *Tom and Jerry* and other cartoons

P11 Yes
Documentaries depicting violence of many forms. Dramas depicting domestic violence

P12 No

P13

P14 Yes
Casualty (BBC1), general soaps and films, *Prime Suspect*

P15

P16 Yes
Sports - Football, boxing, wrestling

P17 Yes
Some documentaries, i.e. war history or news of what is happening today

P19 Yes
Crime thrillers, e.g. *Prime Suspect*

P20 Yes
Most films have some aspect of violence. Anything with knives or guns

P21 No

P22 Yes
Films, Police shows, documentaries

P23 No

P24 No

P25 Yes
Violence as portrayed in various 'soaps' - *EastEnders*

P26 Yes
Cracker / *Prime Suspect*

3) *Do you enjoy any of the programmes you have mentioned above? (Yes/No)*
What do you like about these programmes?
How do you feel when you see violent scenes in these programmes?

P1 Yes

P2

P3 Yes
Real life experiences, well maybe not *The X Files*!

P4 Yes
The speed of the action, the moral stance
It doesn't bother me because I know it isn't real

- P5 No
Distressed
- P6
- P7 Yes
Access to another side of human life
Intrigued
- P8 Yes
Sometimes the suspense and the fact that these things can or do happen
Sometimes nervous, sometimes anger, occasionally disgust
- P9 Yes
If it applies to film - I see the director as portraying violence in a negative way (that is so bad characters are not to be seen as role models)
- P10 The sadism and cruelty
Amused
- P11 No
- P12
- P13
- P14 Yes
Real life, action aspects
- P15
- P16 No
- P17 Yes
World War history and trying to find reasons why it all happened
Very disturbed and distressed
- P19 Yes
Drama, thought provoking
Depends on how explicit. Sometimes fell very squeamish. Don't like watching people being shot in the head
- P20 Yes
You have to see through the violence to enjoy it and just say to yourself that it's not real life
I sometimes have to look away from those scenes
- P21 No
- P22 Yes
The stories, the acting and the fact that they are just TV programmes not real life
Take them for what they are 'pretend' don't take them too seriously
- P23
- P24

- P25 Yes
I enjoy laughing at the weak storyline, poor actors and general falseness
I just watch it
- P26 Yes
Thriller types which do not necessarily show a lot of violence but we know it has occurred and we try to put the pieces together as the characters (detectives) do
Sometimes look away (knowing what is happening) because these programmes are based on reality without being fat fetched. It can be disturbing knowing that this behaviour exists
- 4) *Do you regularly go the cinema or hire videos to watch at home? (Yes/No)*
If so, what kind of films do you like to watch?
What do you enjoy about these films?
- P1 Yes
Comedy, fictional
I suppose it's something to watch
- P2 No
- P3 Yes
Comedy, Real life stories, History
The humour, and real life and history is something to relate to
- P4 Yes
Thrillers and comedies
The plot and the wittiness of the script
- P5 Yes
Pornography
Seeing Asian women having sex with dogs
- P6 Yes
Comedy, thriller, real life stories, some action films
Escapism, making me laugh, sheer entertainment, suspense
- P7 Yes
Ones which make you think
The challenge
- P8 Yes
All sorts - thrillers, comedy, weepies, some westerns
To an extent all films are a form of escapism and take your mind off any problems you may have
- P9 Yes
Films based on story rather than action and it violence is necessary to tell a story then so be it
A good story that leaves a new discourse to ponder over (what the director intends the film to say)
- P10 Yes
Science fiction and comedy
Space ships and wit
- P11 Yes
Dramas

Becoming involved in the relationship portrayed

- P12 Yes
Psychological thrillers, love stories, 'true' stories, comedies
Psychological thrillers encourage more thought than usual; the others are light entertainment, or in the case of 'true' stories are entertaining and informative
- P13 No
- P14 Yes
Action, thriller, comedy
Everything
- P15 No
- P16 Yes
Comedy and science fiction
- P17 Yes
Comedy, love stories and sometimes thrillers
I think the kind of film you are watching depends on your mood i.e. enjoy laughing when watching a comedy
- P19 Yes
All kinds. Thrillers and Romances especially. Stemming from films analysis at University. Don't like slapstick American comedy
- P20 Yes
Anything really - quite a wide spectrum
- P21 Yes
Love, comedy, thrillers
Fantasy, escapism, suspense
- P22 No
- P23 No
- P24 No
- P25 No specific favourites
Storyline, plot, complexity
- P26 Yes
Various
Storyline, romance, special effects, excitement, thrilling, and sometimes scary

5) *Do you find that the films you choose include scenes that are violent? (Yes/No)*
How do you feel when you see a violent scene on your chosen film?

- P1 Yes
It doesn't bother me
- P2
- P3 Yes
Sometimes part of the drama

- P4 No
- P5 Yes
Aroused
- P6 Yes
I think the violence depends on the type of violence being shown. I find the more 'realistic' scenes disturbing and sometimes upsetting
- P7 Yes
It depends on the context which the violence is in, if gratuitous I generally fell bored or patronised, if necessary for plot/character development I often fell interested
- P8 Yes
Most times injustice and *anger* - take for example *Ghost*, where the good guy is killed. Sometimes excitement, like in the Rocky films when you feel you are in the ring yourself
- P9 N/A
As I've said - if they are relevant)as they normally are - in the films I choose - ok. Else I'll switch off or watch it in criticism
- P10 Yes
Usually that the 'good guys' should do something about it
- P11 Yes
Interested and horrified
- P12 Yes
- P13
- P14 Yes
Nothing except in extreme cases of violence where it is not really necessary
- P15
- P16 Yes
disgusting
- P17 Yes
I turn away or go out of the room for a short while
- P19 Yes
As with TV. Some films I feel that violence is secondary as in *Pulp Fiction*
- P20 Yes
Some scenes of violence are too much, especially for family viewing
- P21 No
- P22
- P23
- P24
- P25 Yes

E.g. *Apocalypse Now / Platoon* - violence is used to put across a message - you have to see past the violence to the deeper message

P26 Yes
If it is unexpected than I may be a bit shocked, if it is unnecessary then it makes me feel angry if I am expecting scenes of violence then I prepare myself

6) *Do you purposively avoid films that are violent? (Yes/No)*
If so, what do you dislike about them?

P1 No

P2 Yes
I feel a lot of published stories/articles in the media happening in life today stress these films and lack of other interests etc. like full employment would create

P3 Yes
I do not like horror type violence or explicit thrillers

P4 No

P5 No

P6 Yes
I dislike violence that exceeds what I consider necessary to a plot or physical/mental violence against women and children

P7 No

P8 No

P9 No

P10 No

P11 No

P12 No

P13

P14 No

P15

P16 No

P17 Yes
Distressing

P19 No
I avoid films like Jackie Chan (Kung Fu) because they are boring

P20 No

P21 Yes

P22

P23

P24

P25 No

P26 Yes
Sometimes I may avoid seeing a violent film unless the story sounds good. I dislike them because scenes sometimes play on my mind afterwards

7) *Do you particularly like films that include violence? (Yes/No)*
If so, what do you enjoy about them?

P1
I'm not too bothered a films a film

P2 No

P3 Yes
Only if in context of the story

P4 No

P5 No

P6 No

P7 No

P8 No

P9 No

P10 No

P11 No

P12 No

P13

P14 No

P15

P16 No

P17 No

P19 No

P20 No

P21 No

P22

P23

P24

P25 Yes
Films which are fast and exciting to me seem to include violence

P26 Occasionally
Sometimes violence in films adds to the 'shock' value making a film more thrilling but this only has to happen a couple of times, where a lot of films now go overboard

8) *Do you think films are more violent at the cinema, or on video, than on television?*
(Yes/No)
Why?

P1 Yes
On television their censored to hell

P2 No

P3 No

P4 Yes
Because TV is more censored

P5 No

P6 No
Occasional 'real life' dramas or adaptations can include violence that is not as 'obvious' as Hollywood moves

P7 Yes
There is more extreme censorship required to allow a film to be shown on television

P8 Yes
Often films on TV are edited, missing out the very worst bits

P9 Yes
Censorship (Mary Whitehouse types) here though the implied violence remains although not so often seen or heard

P10 No

P11 Yes
Because they are aimed at an adult audience

P12 Yes
Hollywood special effects, blood and gore have to be more impressive than the previous one

P13 Yes
Because they are supposed to play to restricted audiences, so people are aware of what they may be about to watch and are mentally adjusted accordingly

P14 Yes
Rules and regulations are not as rigid. Easier to show on video/cinema than on TV

P15 No

- P16 Yes
Films which to be shown on television have strict regulations via the British Board of Films Classification
- P17 Yes
18 certificate, ITC standards will not allow it
- P19 Yes
Films can be selective on their audience
- P20 Yes
Films on TV can be older when rules for showing violence were stricter. Modern films at the cinema can get away with more
- P21 Yes
- P22 Yes
Because censors can get away with more things such as sex and violence on video and in the cinema than on TV
- P23 Yes
Cinema - larger screen - corporate activity
- P24 No
- P25 No
- P26 Yes
TV is usually better censored than videos and films at the cinema because they have a responsibility to the nation. Videos and cinema films can get away with more because they people are going to see them.

9) *Do you think violent films are a healthy part of society that should remain as a popular form of entertainment? (Yes/No)*
Why?

- P1 Yes
It shows kids what not to do
- P2 No
- P3
- P4 Yes
They are an extension of legend and folk lore. No normal person would see that but as fantasy
- P5 No
- P6 Yes
I think violence in context and at appropriate times can inform people of real life situations. The media can reflect what happens in the real world; violence exists so we shouldn't ignore it in the media
- P7 Yes

It is unwise to brush the darker side of humanity under the carpet, if dealt with responsibly, ungratuitously, the portrayal of violence can be beneficial in making us aware of the consequences of such actions

- P8 Yes
For reality, as real life can be violent. This is not to say that I agree to violence being shown for the sake of it. Some films do go way over the top
- P9 No
But I believe in freedom of speech and not censorship!
- P10 Yes
It is more healthy to let the pus drain from a wound. Violent films give a vent to the violence in society
- P11 Yes
Because it can 'comfort' people who are isolated in a destructive relationship and make them realise that they are not alone in this situation and hopefully seek help
- P12 No
Too many cases of *Rambo*-style shoot outs etc. due to influence of cinema
- P13 Yes
If the cathartic significance is relevant then it's okay, but violence out of context has no meaning (justification) and so may be seen as an acceptable part of societal acts and copied
- P14 No
- P15 Yes
I believe in freedom of choice and I also believe that people can be subject to as much if not more violence in their own home and on the street as they do watching a violent films
- P16 No
- P17 No
- P19 Yes No
I wouldn't say violent films would be classed as 'healthy' but I don't think they should be banned, if people want to watch it, they should be able to
- P20 No
- P21 No
Because children learn inappropriate behaviour and copy. People with special needs i.e. criminals and weaker, socially inadequate may copy
- P22
I wouldn't say violence was healthy but it will always be in films because it makes money, as for entertainment that depends on the individual
- P23 No
Note - a violent film is not the same as a film with violent scenes
- P24 No
- P25 Yes

We all, whether we deny it or not, have some need for violence - films which contain violence allow controlled expression

- P26 No
No, not really because some people are easily led. People are often guided by society and violence should not be considered a norm

10) *Do you think there are too many violent films? (Yes/No)*
If so, what should be done about it?

- P1 No
- P2 Yes
It would be difficult to say really because whatever was legalised would be hard to put into practice the state family values appear to be in today. Discipline is at an all time low.
- P3
- P4 No
- P5 No
- P6 Yes
I think it's a difficult area to monitor securely. Unsure of measures needed.
- P7 Yes
I would prefer a trend towards films in which violence is only part of the plot, rather than all there is to the film. Violence and the consequences of violence should be dealt with in a realistic way.
- P8 No
- P9 N/A
Violence doesn't make me violent but it can others - no simple solution
- P10 Yes
Live in a less violent world
- P11 Yes
Heavier censorship
- P12 Yes
A boycotting of such films
- P13 Yes No
- P14 No
- P15 No
- P16 Yes
Any films which cause violent behaviour should have further restrictions
- P17 Yes
Shops and cinemas should stop selling/viewing but they won't because of money
- P19 No

There is no too many violent films - I think there is a fair balance, but there is too much of an obsession with crime and killers in the UK

- P20 Yes
A hint of violence is OK, but graphic scenes can be too gory and cause crimes
- P21 Yes
Higher certificates and encourage more parental control. Also this should encourage film makers to make more films with less meaningless violence
- P22
I think that there are too may films for youngsters that contain violent images and they should be toned down for the kids' sake
- P23 No
- P24 Yes
Switch off television and don't go to see them at cinema
- P25 Yes
Reduce need for violence - calm today's violent society
- P26 Yes
Maybe there could be a limit on how may violent scenes can be shown within a film

Appendix 3

Study 1b: Experiencing Violence Interviews

3.1 Interview Schedule

The schedule below was used in the interviews conducted in Study 1b. It was used to ensure all the subjects listed were discussed by each participant. Excluding the introduction however, the order of the seven topics included on this interview schedule is not fixed although the majority of participants spoke about their experiences of violence in real life first.

Real Life Violence	Film and Television Violence
Introduction Permission to record Participant will remain anonymous Inspiration: the paradox of violence, Tarantino's film <i>Reservoir Dogs</i>	Television Violent television programme Violent scene Emotions and responses Enjoyment Avoid violent programmes Rationalisation of characters' violence Watershed Censorship Adults' choice
Real Life Experience Witness of victim Response to event Immediate emotions Need to talk (LVCSS, friends, other associations) Friends/family Behaviour change Attitude change	Film Violence Violent film Violent scene Emotions and responses Enjoyment Rationalisation of characters' violence Rationalisation of violence per se Classification Controversy
Dealing/Coping with the Experience Feelings toward aggressor Understand any motivation for violence Revenge Avoid people of a similar social group Did talking help Profound effect Most distressing aspect	Attitude to Media Violence Media's attitude to copy cat crime Agreement with these concerns Action required Desensitisation - especially children Media's role Anything to gain from watching media violence

Sense of Self	Comments about interview or participant
How long ago	
Feelings changed toward aggressor	
Put it behind you	
Memories - vivid or clouded	
Feelings now when think about it	
Any triggers that bring it back	

3.2 Participant Sample

Depicted in the table below are the personal details of those participants who were interviewed in Study 1b. All except P18 also completed a questionnaire for Study 1a.

Participant	Sex	Age	Employment	Marital Status
2	M	65+	Retired	Married
6	F	18-25	Administrator	Single
7	M	18-25	Student	Single
8	M	36-45	Driving Examiner	Live with partner
11	F	36-45	Student	Separated
12	F	26-35	Student	Single
14	M	26-35	Local Government Officer	Single
18	F		Secretary	

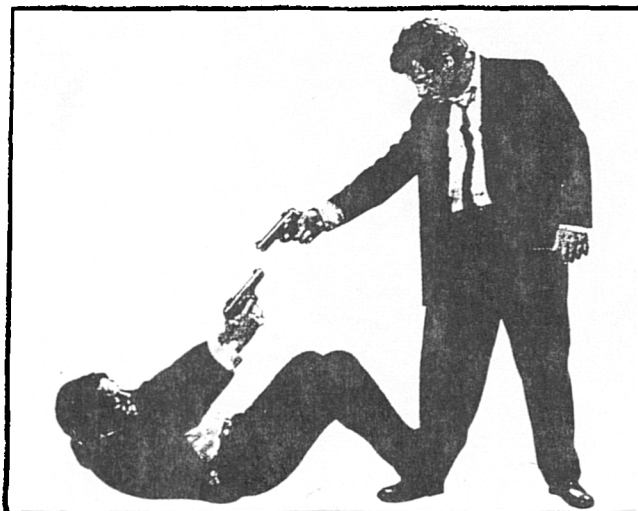
Appendix 4

Study 2: Meanings of Violence

4.1 Participant Campaign Poster

Below is a copy of the poster used to solicit participants for Study 2. The original was larger than this version and was in colour.

FILM VIOLENCE



What do you think about violence in the movies?

Pulp Fiction, Reservoir Dogs, Natural Born Killers, Kalifornia, Die Hard, Platoon, The Accused, GoodFellas, Casino, True Romance, Lethal Weapon, The Usual Suspects...

Have you ever encountered violence in real life?

Whatever your experience, I would like to hear about it.

This is your chance to help in a piece of "90s" research about these essential issues of the phenomenon that is media violence.

If you are interested in helping me find out more, please let me know. My name is **Rachel Shaw** and I am a PhD student at De Montfort University.

Department of Human Communication, Scraftoft Campus, De Montfort University, Scraftoft, Leicester, LE7 9SU.

0116 255 1551 ext. 8755 rlshaw@dmu.ac.uk

Thank you for your interest.

4.2 Interview Schedule

The schedule below was used in all the interviews conducted in Study 2 in order to ensure sufficient topics were discussed by participants. The first table includes the issues about film violence and the second experiences of violence in real life. In each the left hand side column represents the general area of inquiry and on the right are further questions which were sometimes needed to prompt participants to expand upon their responses.

Film Violence	
[a difficult to watch film first; repeat again for an acceptable film]	
Film name Why did you select/watch this film?	What made it difficult to watch? / Why was it acceptable in your opinion? Was is the whole film or particular scenes?
What is your opinion about the use of violence in this film?	Describe the violent actions. Was it physical acts/threats/other? Was it justified or unjustified?
Which scenes struck you most in terms of the violence in it?	Describe the scene. Was it physical acts/threats/other? Was it justified or unjustified? What is your opinion about the characters; were their actions justified? Did you know why they were being violent?
What kind of emotions did you feel when watching the violent images?	Do you often find yourself reacting in this way? Could the violence have been any worse? What would have made it less/more bearable? Has the experience of watching these violent images had a long lasting effect on you?
Do you think the violence was acceptable in the context of the story told?	Did you enjoy the story? Was the violence necessary to tell the story?
If you were writing a critique of this film, how would you describe it?	Would the violence have to be included in the description? Would you have to warn people that it is violent? Would you advise people to see it? Why do you think the film maker thought it necessary to include the violent scenes?
How would you describe/define a representation of violence in a film/	Are there different kinds of actions which are violence in your opinion? Does the definition of violence depend on anything?
Do you think the violence in this film can be compared to real life violence in any way?	Have you ever seen any violence in real life that is on the same scale as that in this film? Do you think that seeing violence in a film can prepare you in any way for seeing violence in real life?

Real Life Violence	
Have you ever experienced anything violent in real life?	Describe what happened. Who was involved? How were you involved? (victim, witness etc.) How long did the violence continue?
Did you immediately realise what was going on?	Did you know why the violent actor was behaving this way? Was is a fair reaction to the circumstances?
What emotions did you feel when witnessing/experiencing this event?	Were these emotions immediate or delayed? Have you ever felt like this before/since? Have you ever experienced a similar event?
Would you say you have encountered much violence?	Do you always react in the same way? Have you developed any strategies to cope with events like this? Has your experience changed your attitude in any way to people/violence/films?
How would you define violence?	Does this definition depend on anything? Is violence in real life comparable to that which you have seen on film?

4.3 Questionnaire for Participants

The questionnaire below was given to participants at the end of the interview as a means of obtaining personal information.

EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE

Distributed by Rachel Shaw, De Montfort University, Leicester.

The aim of this questionnaire is to obtain general information about those taking part in this research. If you feel unhappy about answering any of the questions below, please feel free to leave them blank and move on to the next one.

Personal Information															
1. Sex Please tick the appropriate box <input type="checkbox"/> female <input type="checkbox"/> male															
2. Age Please tick the appropriate box <table border="0"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> 18 – 25</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> 26 – 30</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> 31 – 35</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> 36 – 40</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> 41 – 45</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> 46 – 50</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> 51 – 55</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> 56 – 60</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> 60 +</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>				<input type="checkbox"/> 18 – 25	<input type="checkbox"/> 26 – 30	<input type="checkbox"/> 31 – 35	<input type="checkbox"/> 36 – 40	<input type="checkbox"/> 41 – 45	<input type="checkbox"/> 46 – 50	<input type="checkbox"/> 51 – 55	<input type="checkbox"/> 56 – 60	<input type="checkbox"/> 60 +			
<input type="checkbox"/> 18 – 25	<input type="checkbox"/> 26 – 30	<input type="checkbox"/> 31 – 35	<input type="checkbox"/> 36 – 40												
<input type="checkbox"/> 41 – 45	<input type="checkbox"/> 46 – 50	<input type="checkbox"/> 51 – 55	<input type="checkbox"/> 56 – 60												
<input type="checkbox"/> 60 +															
3. Marital Status Please tick the appropriate box <table border="0"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> single</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> living with partner</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> married</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> divorced</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> widowed</td><td></td></tr></table>				<input type="checkbox"/> single	<input type="checkbox"/> living with partner	<input type="checkbox"/> married	<input type="checkbox"/> divorced	<input type="checkbox"/> widowed							
<input type="checkbox"/> single	<input type="checkbox"/> living with partner	<input type="checkbox"/> married													
<input type="checkbox"/> divorced	<input type="checkbox"/> widowed														
4. Employment and Education Please state your job title/description or area of training whether currently in or out of work Please state any academic/vocational qualifications or certificates that you hold															
5. Your comments Please feel free to use this space to comment on the interview, this questionnaire, or anything that comes to mind having just completed the interview															

4.4 Participant Sample

Participants' personal information is depicted in the table below.

Participant	Sex	Age	Employment and Education	Marital Status
1	M	41-45	Police Inspector	Married
2	M	26-30	Warehouse person 2 O Levels	Single
3	M	36-40	Leisure Manager (Local Authority) 13 O Levels, 3 A Levels, HND Business Studies	Living with partner
4	F	31-35	Administrator External Relations (De Montfort University) Degree, PGCE	Living with partner
5	M	18-25	Student GCSEs, A Levels, Degree (hopefully)	Single
6	F	18-25	Dental Nurse National Certificate for the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses	Single
7	M	60+	Retired Safety Officer HGV/PSV Driving Instructor	Divorced
8	F	46-50	Student GCSE English, Psychology, Sociology, Child Development	Widowed
9	F	60+	Part-time Domestic Pensioner	Married
10	F	18-25	Student Access in Humanities, GCSEs Business Studies, Art and Design, Maths	Living with partner
11	M	18-25	Back of House Manager/Stock Manager BA Business Studies	Single
12	M	46-50	Methodist Minister BA Open - Religion, Philosophy Ordination Training, Certificate in Community and Youth Work	Married
13	F	56-60	Retired Teacher (Secondary) Teachers' Certificate	Single

4.5 Film List

A list of films was used in Study 2 to initiate participants' discussions about their experiences of violence via popular film. Below is the list from which participants chose two films, one which they believed to be acceptable in terms of the representations of violence in it and one which they found difficult to watch because of the violence portrayed.

FILM LIST

Please choose 2 films from this list which will then be discussed in confidence in the interview: one which includes violence you found difficult watch, and one which includes violence you found acceptable.

The Accused (Director: Kaplan, 1988)

Starring Jodie Foster as a provocatively dressed woman who is gang raped in a bar. The film follows the subsequent trial.

Born on the Fourth of July (Stone, 1989)

Starring Tom Cruise. It tells the story of a soldier who fights in the Vietnam War and how he copes with life once he returns home.

Bram Stoker's Dracula (Ford Coppola, 1992)

Starring Gary Oldman, Anthony Hopkins, Keanu Reeves and Winona Rider. It tells the story of Dracula who, after the tragic death of his wife 400 years previously, falls in love with an English woman who seems to be her reincarnation.

Casino (Scorsese, 1995)

Starring Robert De Niro, Sharon Stone, Joe Pesci and others. A gambler managing a Los Angeles casino owned by the mafia runs into trouble when he falls in love with a call-girl.

Copycat (Amiel, 1995)

Starring Sigourney Weaver, Holly Hunter, Deront Mulroney and others. An acclaimed agoraphobic psychologist specialising in serial killers teams up with a female detective to track down a serial killer.

Die Hard (McTiernan, 1988)

Starring Bruce Willis, Bonnie Bedelia, Reginald VelJohnson and others. A cop battles with terrorists who have taken over a building where his wife is among the hostages.

Donnie Brasco (Newell, 1997)

Starring Al Pacino, Johnny Depp, Michael Madsen and others. Based on a true story an undercover FBI agent successfully infiltrates the mafia only to face a moral dilemma between duty and a friendship with the gangster who vouched for him.

From Dusk Till Dawn (Rodriguez, 1995)

Starring George Clooney, Quentin Tarantino, Harvey Keitel and Juliette Lewis. Two ruthless robbers take a preacher and his family hostage on their journey to Mexico. During the journey, however, there is a shocking turn of events.

Good Morning Vietnam (Levinson, 1987)

Starring Robin Williams, Forest Whitaker, Tung Thanh Tran and others. It tells the story of an armed forces radio disk-jockey in Saigon during the height of the Vietnam war.

GoodFellas (Scorsese, 1990)

Starring Robert DeNiro, Ray Liotta, Joe Pesci, Lorraine Bracco and others. It tells the story of an Irish-Italian boy who grows up to be a mafia gangster.

Heat (Mann, 1995)

Starring Al Pacino, Robert De Niro and Val Kilmer. It tells the story of a streetwise Los Angeles cop who comes to respect a ruthless leader of a gang of armed robbers.

Interview With The Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles (Jordan, 1994)

Starring Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, Antonio Banderas, Christian Slater and others. A vampire reminisces about his life over the past 200 years. It tells the story of his friendship with an older vampire, who initiated him, and the young female vampire they both created.

Kalifornia (Sena, 1993)

Starring Brad Pitt, Juliette Lewis, David Duchovny, Michelle Forbes and others. A couple writing about and photographing sites of murders unwittingly take as their travel partners a killer and his girlfriend.

LA Confidential (Hansen, 1997)

Starring Kevin Spacey, Russel Crowe, Guy Pearce, James Cromwell, Kim Basinger and Danny DeVito. In 50s Los Angeles a mysterious multiple murder in a diner reveals a complex tale of corruption. Three very different detectives work on the case.

Lethal Weapon (Donner, 1987)

Starring Mel Gibson and Danny Glover as a cop duo in their fight against drugs and crime.

Natural Born Killers (Stone, 1994)

Starring Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis. Mickey and Mallory Knox murder Mallory's parents and then proceed along route 66 leaving death and bloodshed in their path.

Platoon (Stone, 1986)

Starring Tom Berenger, William DaFoe, Charlie Sheen and others. It tells the story of a group of Infantry men during the Vietnam war.

Pulp Fiction (Tarantino, 1994)

Starring Samuel L. Jackson, John Travolta, Uma Thurman, Harvey Keitel and Bruce Willis. It tells three interlocking stories of crime, drugs and boxing.

Reservoir Dogs (Tarantino, 1992)

Starring Harvey Keitel, Tim Roth, Chris Penn, Steve Buscemi, Lawrence Tierney and Michael Madsen. It tells the story of a diamond robbery gone wrong.

Seven (Fincher, 1995)

Starring Brad Pitt, Morgan Freeman, Kevin Spacey and others. A detective nearing retirement and his young replacement track down a serial killer who is working his way through the seven deadly sins.

Shallow Grave (Boyle, 1994)

Starring Kerry Fox, Christopher Eccleston, Ewan McGregor, Ken Scott and others. Three flatmates find their new tenant dead in his room with a briefcase full of cash decide to dispose of the body and keep the money.

The Terminator (Cameron, 1984)

Starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Michael Biehn, Linda Hamilton and others. An android from the future is sent back to the present on a mission of extermination.

True Romance (Scott, 1993)

Starring Christian Slater, Patricia Arquette, Dennis Hopper, Val Kilmer, Gary Oldman and Brad Pitt. A shop assistant and a call-girl go on the run with a suitcase full of cocaine, chased by gangsters

Twelve Monkeys (Gilliam, 1995)

Starring Bruce Willis, Brad Pitt, Madeleine Stowe, Christopher Plummer and others. In 2035 when all the surviving people live underground to escape the effects of a deadly virus, a convict is sent back to 1996 to find out more about the disease - or is it just a psychotic having a bad dream!

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (Luhrmann, 1996)

Starring Leonardo DeCaprio, Claire Danes, Pete Postlethwaite and others. Using the original script, in modern day Verona Beach a young couple suffer from family opposition to their affair.

Reference: **Walker, J. (Ed.) (1997)** *Halliwel's Film & Video Guide 1998 Edition*. London: Harper Collins Publishers.

4.6 Film Analysis

Further details about the films on the list (in Appendix 4.5) together with the others mentioned by participants in the interviews were collected in order to inform Study 2. This film analysis, below, includes information about the films discussed taken from books and magazines which specialise on cinema together with extracts from the participants' discourse. In addition, several television programmes were mentioned by participants, these are included at the end of this analysis.

***An American Werewolf in London* (Director: Landis, 1981)**

"Two American tourists are bitten by a werewolf. Curious but oddly endearing mixture of horror film and spoof, of comedy and shock, with everything grist to its mill including tourist Britain and the wedding of Prince Charles." (Walker, 1997: 24)

P3: "An American Werewolf in London which is pretty gruesome you see people ripped to pieces and arms flying around yet when I described it to my friends it was funny .. it's a great movie and it's funny"

P3: "you don't actually take the time to describe [*the violence*] to your friends [. . .] I don't think you need to because they've seen similar films and they know what to expect"

***The Accused* (Kaplan, 1988)**

"A provocatively-dressed woman is raped after performing a sexy dance at a seedy bar." (Walker, 1997: 40)

"The rape itself is not shown until near the end of the film, and then in an unblinking detail which some critics have suggested will turn the cinema audience itself into voyeurs. Nonetheless, this is a brave film [which treads] a fine line between social concerns, feminism and exploitation." (Karney, 1997: 781)

P3: "clear difference between violent and disturbing"

P3: "when it could happen to you"

P3: "you knew the message from the film makers at the start but you didn't want to face it that bluntly .. it was uncomfortable because you knew she didn't want to be in that position [. . .] it's not a violent scene it's a disturbing scene there's a clear difference [. . .] it's the quality of portrayal the mental torture that the girl has been through .. it's mentally violent rather than physical [. . .] it's far more damaging to live with being raped than having your arm cut with a knife having your physical being invaded must be much worse"

P3: "you can quite comfortably live with the mental argument in court that's no problem because it's within the context .. the difficult bit is the act of violence because she couldn't stop it and you knew what was going to happen and you didn't need to see it .. the producer wants you to see it because he puts you the audience in the same boat as the crowd who are later to become the guilty party .. he was making the audience guilty as well [. . .] the producer then said you are the violent people because you were clapping and applauding .. it's very clever .. that is why I was uncomfortable because he made me be something I didn't want to be he made me stand still and watch"

- P3: "there are two parts to the story it's a legal story and hidden beneath that is the violence the profession has to deal with [. .] the law is not the moral law of the country it is a set of strange rules made up by a bunch of strange people"
- P4: "but something like a woman walking into a bar getting raped is something that goes on"
- P5: "it shouldn't really be on the screen but then again it was interesting to watch"
- P5: "it was more on a personal level it was kind of disturbing but it was still a good film"
- P6: "that was particularly disturbing I didn't like that very much because it could happen to me"
- P6: "sometimes violence helps get a story across .. you had to show the rape because that's what the whole film is about"
- P6: "the only way you can portray a character or a story"
- P8: "I made a conscious decision not to watch it because I'd get really upset by the rape scene"
- P9: "*The Accused* was violent but I had to watch it in fact I watch it two or three times [. .] it was an excellent film [. .] I was very angry indeed I cried [. .] it was ghastly .. one of the best films I've seen that and it sticks with you"
- P9: "it brings it home to you when you watch that that was just one instance and there are things like that going on everyday"
- P9: "it was horrendous .. what they did to her as much as [. .] how hard it was after .. I don't think she asked for that and it made me angry [. .] I didn't look away I just wanted to help her I hated them [. .] I was very angry indeed I cried because I thought that poor girl and not for one minute did I blame her it was just awful"
- P9: "was real and it made me feel inside"
- P9: "there must be many people like that"
- P10: "you can relate to it"
- P10: "because you could imagine yourself in that position"

***Blazing Saddles* (Brooks, 1974)**

"Wild Western parody in which the action eventually shifts to the Warner backlot, after which the actors repair to Grauman's Chinese Theater to find out what happened at the end of the story. At least as many misses as hits, and all aimed squarely at film buffs." (Walker, 1997: 86)

- P12: "there was violence in that even though it was a comedy a lot of shooting"

***Blue Velvet* (Lynch, 1986)**

"Writer-director David Lynch has come up with an audacious shocker that proves itself a determinedly weird, disturbing original and subversive take on middle America. In *Blue Velvet*, clean, sweet, small-town youngsters Kyle MacLachlan and Laura Dern get caught up in the

mystery surrounding nightclub chanteuse Isabelle Rossellini and discover, to their horror, what goes on behind the near picket fences. Rossellini is tormented by psychotic sadist, kidnapper and drug dealer Dennis Hopper, whose intense performance dominates and is appallingly riveting. The sexual violence and obscenities will offend those squeamish of eye and ear." (Karney, 1997: 762)

P4: "I'm not sure I could watch it a third time [. . .] she had been so brutalised that she was now getting some pleasure out of the violence it disturbed me"

P4: "sadomasochism .. brutalised but gaining pleasure from it"

P9: "it was a bit pornographic but it was a good film"

Born on the Fourth of July (Stone, 1989)

"A crippled Vietnam veteran joins the anti-war movement." (Walker, 1997: 98)

"Kovic, who was crippled in Vietnam, collaborated with Stone on the screenplay, which takes him from gung-ho patriot to anti-war activist." (Karney, 1997: 782):

P5: "it was a bit too 'hey we're American' .. it kind of put me off"

P6: "not entertaining"

P6: "real people being shot .. shows what they had to endure"

P6: "well because they're true to life and real people being shot it happened"

P9: "that was awful .. senseless"

Casino (Scorsese, 1995)

"Deft, involving and intriguing depiction of the inescapable corruption of the spirit, in a city built on greed." (Walker, 1997: 134)

"Martin Scorsese's three-hour-plus "urban Western" continues his fascination with the Mob. [. . .] The violence eclipses even that of *GoodFellas*, a particularly terrifying scene shows one of the mobsters having his head clamped into a vice." (Karney, 1997: 869)

P2: "my eyes were wincing [. . .] it's not an easy scene to watch at all"

P2: "it was necessary to the plot to portray the lives of people in the mafia"

P4: "the scene with the head in the vice I found difficult because that would be a terrible thing to happen to anyone and although it's quite unusual for me to look away I think I actually look away because it was so vile"

P4: "I think I actually did look away because it was so vile .. it was an important scene .. these films are fairly serious films explaining an age and a group of people who lived at that time and although I found it hard to watch I could understand why it was there"

P5: "I think that's really dark humour and I find that kind of amusing"

A Clockwork Orange (Kubrick, 1971)

"Adapted from the novel by Anthony Burgess, it's a frightening prophetic vision of a Britain of the future in which roaming gangs of young men have adopted violence as their only way of life ... The film's controversial message seems to be that free will and individuality must be preserved at any cost. The violence, though explicitly shown, is given a stylised unreality,

mainly through the use of music, such as the voice of Gene Kelly crooning "Singing in the Rain" while the gang beat up an old tramp, or the choral movement from Beethoven's Ninth which becomes Alex's stimulation to sadistic pleasures." (Karney, 1997: 613)

P5: "crude violence"

P5: "it was interesting but it was banned I suppose because of all the social stuff behind it rather than the actual images on the screen .. no matter how bad they get people say copycat crime and stuff and they might possibly but I don't think that's a reason to ban films [. . .] it's an open society people should be allowed to watch it as long as it's advertised properly"

P12: "tolerated violence .. you could sense it was there"

P12 "no I didn't enjoy it .. I didn't enjoy it .. I didn't enjoy it but it affected me"

P12 "it really frightened me"

P12 "I want to say fiction can be true even though it's fiction it can be truthfully displayed"

Copland (Mangold, 1997)

"Police officer is involved in a joyriding incident and is forced into hiding because he killed the joy-riders as he thought they were threatening him with a gun, it turned out to be a driving lock. The cover up is suspected, violence ensues. Influenced by western genre." (Macnab, 1997: 42)

P2: "I tend to watch the Tarantino Scorsese pictures like in *Copland* the characters are more realistic they're not superhuman they're shown with their weaknesses"

Crash (Cronenberg, 1996)

"After being injured in a car crash, a man and a woman are initiated into a group that is sexually aroused by such occurrences [. . .] After much controversy, the film was passed uncut in Britain; the British Board of Film Classification consulted a forensic psychologist, an audience of the disabled and a QC, who concluded that 'rather than sympathising or identifying with the attitudes or tastes of the characters in this film, the average viewer would in the end be repelled by them, and would reject the values and sexual proclivities displayed'. The Daily Mail condemned the BBFC's decision, commenting, 'All the psychobabble in the world cannot refute the simple fact: The film is sick. It should not be shown'." (Walker, 1997: 173)

P2: "they banned *Crash* in Westminster without actually seeing it it's like living in a dictatorship"

P3: "the controversy about *Crash* is off the wall because I can't see many people taking part in this sort of activity [. . .] it wasn't going to start a new trend"

The Deer Hunter (Cimino, 1978)

"attempts to address the effect of the Vietnam war on the American psyche. The three hour film accurately captures the mood in America at the moment – the need to find some justification for the war [. . .] In Vietnam, there is a gripping set piece when the friends are forced to play a game of Russian roulette by their Viet Cong captors, a scene which has been criticized for depicting the enemy as the incarnation of evil, without comment on American tactics." (Karney, 1997: 679)

P13: "informed .. everybody should see it"

P13: "cruelty"

- P13: "I suppose the Russian roulette scenes with the prisoners and them being imprisoned under water and you never knowing what was going to happen .. that hit me tremendously"
- P13: "I suppose the first film that I saw that made a terrific impression that I thought was tremendous [. . .] that I felt was informed [. . .] because it made you understand that war is not something glamorous and pretty and heroic modern warfare is just horrendous"
- P13: "these things did happen .. even though it's a film .. because you don't want to think that the world has become such a dreadful place I'd rather avoid the images because they linger and I will think about them and it's depressing"
- P13: "that haunted me for ages"
- P13: "I found that horrific but captivating"
- P13: "one of the first ones I suppose that gave you some idea of what it was like in Vietnam"
- P13: "I suppose it goes back to the last war with the Japanese and what they did to their prisoners"
- P13: "I suppose you don't want to think that that can really happen and of course these things were happening and did happen"
- P13: "this is what should never happen so it's an antiwar film to me rather than a war film [...] and the consequences that modern warfare has for people"
- P13: "I think it can be useful if you're a controlled sort of person [. . .] to me it did make a point it showed you that modern warfare was not glamorous"
- P13: "I've watched it loads of times since nearly every time it comes on TV I think no I won't watch it this time but I do .. I suppose because I go back to the original feeling I had first that there was a point to it"

Die Hard (McTiernan, 1988)

"A cop battles with terrorists who have taken over the building where his wife is among the hostages. Powerful, suspenseful action movie, with splendid special effects, although it goes on rather too long." (Walker, 1997: 211)

- P4: "I would not be interested in the subject matter .. the violence is so constant it becomes ordinary"
- P9: "silly useless violence"
- P9: "shoot shoot shoot"
- P9: "it didn't tell a story it didn't do anything for me .. I think they're silly .. daft"
- P11: "in that there's things like bombs going off and more bullets fired than the entire British Army fire in a year and nobody really gets hurt .. there's just people lying there with dazed expression on their face and a little blood mark on their shirt .. it's not true to life"

- P13: "the week when Diana died [. .] they cancelled it and put Kevin Costner *Field of Dreams* on instead as if they were aware that that was an unacceptable image to put on at that time"

***Donnie Brasco* (Newell, 1997)**

"After he successfully infiltrates the Mafia, an undercover agent for the FBI finds himself torn between duty and friendship for the gangster who vouched for him. A mob movie, based on a true story, that takes an almost academic interest in the rituals and manners of its denizens, concerned less with their actions than their characters, which gives it an effectively tragic intensity as two different sets of loyalties collide." (Walker, 1997: 221)

- P2: "necessary to the plot"
- P2: "the first time that scene went on for ages and the second time I realised it was a very brief scene"
- P4: "easier to cope with if it is explained by the plot"
- P4: "these films are fairly serious films explaining an age and a group of people who lived at that time"
- P5: "helps the storyline"
- P8: "you're actually showing what went on and if you don't show the violence then you're not being true to the story because that's the way they did things"

***Face/Off* (Woo, 1997)**

"two characters literally become their own worst enemies. The movie propels itself on this role-switching gimmick and Woo's trademark excess. [. .] In sci-fi, medical experiments gone wrong lead to violence. In romantic comedy, mistaken identities resolve with domestic stasis. Here, we get both, and the result is suspenseful as it is liberating." (Dougherty, 1997: 39)

- P2: "a very good film but the action was uninvolved"

***Full Metal Jacket* (Kubrick, 1987)**

"After rigorous training, US Marines land in Vietnam. Smartly ordered but rather ordinary and predictable war film to come from one of the cinema's acknowledged masters after seven years of silence." (Walker, 1997: 293)

- P11: "the only thing that ever shocked me in a Vietnam film [. .] it sickens me I think I'm a little queasy and maybe and you're looking at it and you feel actually physically sick [. .] I can feel myself trying to imagine what's happening to that body [. .] I can feel my stomach creasing and starting to feel sick and the pain must be intense"

***The Godfather* (Ford Coppola, 1972)**

"When, after ruling for two generations, the Mafia's New York head dies of old age, his son takes over reluctantly but later learns how to kill." (Walker, 1997: 311)

"Adapted from Mario Puzo's Mafia saga, *The Godfather* [. .] Before production began Italian-American Civil Rights League held a rally in Madison Square Garden and raised \$600,000 towards attempts to stop the film which they claimed was a slur on their community." (Karney, 1997: 619)

- P2: "necessary to the plot"
- P4: "easier to cope with if it is explained by the plot"

- P4: "these films are fairly serious films explaining an age and a group of people who lived at that time"
- P4: "you had a background to the character and might understand his motivation although you might not agree with it you could see why he did it .. it's the same with the *Godfather* films"
- P5: "helps the storyline"
- P5: "it's kind of interesting a fantasy life style I wouldn't mind being a gangster you get to wear sharp suits and have loads of money and you think that's kind of cool"
- P8: "you're actually showing what went on and if you don't show the violence then you're not being true to the story because that's the way they did things"

***Good Morning Vietnam* (Levinson, 1987)**

"Director Barry Levinson has turned to Vietnam for his subject, but, this time, to satirise the buffoon-like stupidity of the top brass back in the comfort of their headquarters and, while not eschewing poignancy, to raise a barrel of laughs, largely provided by the star." (Karney, 1997: 773)

- P5: "I thought it was really good"
- P8: "I thought it was quite funny mainly because of Robin Williams really"
- P13: "I though it was a brilliant film"

***GoodFellas* (Scorsese, 1990)**

"Martin Scorsese's *GoodFellas* is a long, violent and enthralling interweaving of biography (the real-life tale of Henry Hill, who grew to manhood in the Mafia, and eventually ratted on his former associates), social observation and black comedy. [. . .] Nevertheless, the physical impact of the movie tends to suppress the troubling issues that lie beneath it: to what extent is the graphic depiction of horrifying violence justified, and is it permissible to find these unscrupulous characters glamorous or sympathetic?" (Karney, 1997: 805)

- P2: "you're observing how these peoples' lives are [. . .] it gives you an insight into the way the Mafia works [. . .] it adds to the realism"
- P2: "others said there's too much violence and too much swearing but that's presenting how these people are and how they were"
- P2: "the way it's presented is really interesting"
- P2: "I've been interested in Mafia films after seeing *GoodFellas* it's a well made film it's interesting and it really happened"
- P5: "Dark humour"
- P5: "you could just imagine his face being caved in that was quite violent .. it was more interesting to watch"
- P8: "you're actually showing what went on and if you don't show the violence then you're not being true to the story because that's the way they did things"

- P9: "yes I liked it it was a good story I thought ooh what's happening next and I didn't want it to finish"
- P9: "I like the mafia films and it did happen it was real it did happen .. maybe that's why I liked watching it because it was real and them sort of things did happen at that time"
- P9: "it's all about gangsters and that yes I enjoyed it .. should I say enjoyed it I liked watching it well I must have enjoyed it mustn't I .. it was different a little bit awful there was sex in it it was a bit rude"
- P9: "I liked it it was a good story [. .] there was a lot of violence in it and the language was appalling [. .] but .."
- P11: "perhaps the scene right at the very beginning where they stab the guy in the boot of a car .. things like that are perhaps a little gruesome and again I thought it was a bit over the top there was no need to show a stabbing like that .. it's just little snippets in films that are over the top"

La Haine (Kassovitz, 1995)

"It has sparked controversy, with Prime Minister Alain Juppé organising a special screening for his cabinet with its young director who makes little secret that his film – and sympathies – are strongly anti-police. *La Haine*, which was inspired by a real-life incident, chronicles the tense 24 hours that follow the beating of a youth in police custody." (Karney, 1997: 861)

- P5: "I like films that make you think .. a French film about inner city youth in Paris .. films that portray real life that's kind of the dark side of life .. it's a really good film"

Heat (Mann, 1995)

"A streetwise Los Angeles cop with marital problems comes to respect the ruthless leader of a gang of armed robbers. A highly polished, lovingly crafted thriller, but overlong, portentous and padded with irrelevant subplots, and on that finally gives birth to a mouse of an idea: that cops and robbers are much alike." (Walker, 1997: 344)

- P11: "gun fights that go on forever"
- P11: "I thought that was completely over the top put in for complete effect"

Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer (McNaughton, 1990)

"Oddly compelling, it is often hard to watch because of its violence, and, perversely, hard not to watch." (Walker, 1997:349)

- P5: "no point to it" (*but later explains its justification*)
- P5: "I thought why are you showing this not to show off the violence or anything it was an investigation into serial killers and the minds of murderers and stuff it was good"

The Jackal (Caton-Jones, 1997)

"Russian Mafia lieutenant Vasilov is killed during a police arrest engineered by FBI agent Preston and Russian intelligence officer Valentino Koslova. In revenge the Mafia hire a contract killer named The Jackal to assassinate the head of the FBI (Tse, 1997: 45)

- P2: "most chilling violent sequences I've ever seen you really felt for some of the victims"

Kalifornia (Sena, 1993)

"A couple driving across America to write about and photograph sites of murders unwittingly have as travelling companions a killer and his girlfriend. An unlovely road movie, simultaneously violent and smug - and too knowing for its own good." (Walker, 1997:418)

- P5: "there's a bit where he smashes a beer bottle in someone's face and they always show that in films but it's virtually impossible to do it the way they show it in films beer bottles are like thick glass and you'd have to break it on something else first I'd imagine"

The Krays (Medak, 1990)

"Twins, who grew up in a mother-dominated household, become feared and fearsome East End thugs. Made with the co-operation of its real-life protagonists, it stays within a gangster milieu and comes close to glamorising them both." (Walker, 1997: 431)

- P11: "when he pushes the dagger into his mouth"

- P11: "I saw the police with CS gas and someone hit them and physically beat them with their truncheons .. when you actually see the thud and you see someone curl in pain that's how violence that sort of thing really gets to me [. . .] *The Krays* is a good example [. . .] and that's what effects me in the street if you see someone in a night club and they're punched and they shake it off it doesn't bother me and they get instantly separated but if it manages to go on a bit I've been unfortunately in situations when I've seen people be hit with glasses and all sorts and their face gets cut and then sat on the floor and start to go deeper and deeper in shock and their face and blood and things" (*witnessed fights in bars etc.*)

L.A. Confidential (Hansen, 1997)

"Police Captain Dudley Smith tells his ambitious incompatible protégé, Sergeant Ed Exley, that he will never make detective unless he's willing to kill men he knows are guilty instead of risking their getting off in court [. . .] In fact, despite its bleak catalogue of murder, rape and betrayal, and without ever making light of them, *L.A. Confidential* manages to be a very witty film, thanks to Ellroy's gallows humour." (Wrathall, 1997: 45-6)

- P11: "false fighting .. guns going off here there and everywhere"

- P8: "someone being beaten up"

- P9: "someone getting knocked to a pulp"

- P11: "see people bruising up and getting cut up in front of you"

- P11: "fantastic film that"

- P11: "it's a good film to split what I feel because there's plenty of shootings when you think oh whatever and there's actual beatings and pain with human people that starts to really sicken me"

- P11: "there's beatings all the way through that film [. . .] I found myself drifting off thinking how the guys in the chair are feeling when they're getting hit with policeman's tool belts [. . .] and the film must have drifted on about 20 minutes and I'm still thinking that must have hurt [. . .] when Danny DeVito got punched in the side and you saw him creasing with pain you just knew exactly what he's feeling I'm feeling it for him"

Lethal Weapon (Donner, 1987)

"The weapon of the title is not a fearsome handgun of the type usually waved in the faces of hoods by Dirty Harry. It's Riggs himself, a veteran of the Special Forces in Vietnam who has

been so traumatised by the death of his wife that he has become a psychological time bomb, ready to explode at any moment." (Karney, 1997: 768)

- P2: "it's fantastical violence .. the likelihood of something like that happening is not realistic"
- P5: "they're all pretty harmless and you can kill a couple of hours"
- P5: "I don't like films like *Lethal Weapon* all the kind of run of the mill bog standard films"
- P5: "you know a gun's only got six bullets in it and they can fire twenty thirty they've got unlimited .. that makes it unreal"
- P6: "humorous .. it couldn't happen in real life"
- P6: "there's a lot of humour in it so you don't find it as distressing as true life stories .. it's entertainment .. I like films that you don't have to think about ones where you can just forget your troubles and enjoy it"
- P6: "people watch it because it's light entertainment and because Mel Gibson's in it and he's quite a funny humorous character"
- P6: "people know that the violence in that is blown out of proportion and it's just light entertainment"

***Men In Black* (Sonnenfeld, 1996)**

"Based on a little-seen Marvel comic, the theme is a trippy twist on McCarthy paranoia as an ultra-secret government agency - jet-black suits, impenetrable Ra-Bans as standard (hence Men In Black) - round up the illegal aliens hanging around Planet Earth. Aliens as in bug-eyed, slime-dolloping visitors from outer space. [. . .] Sonnenfeld keeps it all bubbling along with a vibrant, comic book buzz." (Nathan, 1997: 40-1)

- P1: "cartoon violence"
- P1: "I wouldn't be worried about my kids seeing it because it's so detached from reality"

***Misery* (Reiner, 1990)**

"A disturbed fan kidnaps an injured novelist and forces him to write a novel featuring her favourite heroine. Impeccably directed, tense thriller." (Walker, 1997: 514)

- P10: "it's that that gets me I don't like seeing that when she put that thing there and she was there with the axe .. although I enjoyed the film I thought it was a brilliant film"

***Natural Born Killers* (Stone, 1994)**

"The controversial saga of a couple (Woody Harrelson, Juliette Lewis) whose cross-country killing spree makes them media darlings and role models, intended by Stone as a satire on the horrors of tabloid culture, misses the mark. Instead it comes across as a morally dubious excursion into grotesque violence, filmed with breathtaking expertise." (Karney, 1997: 858)

- P2: "it's a pretty uneasy film to watch"
- P2: "they're not really violent films there is violence within the films but it's there for a purpose"

- P2: "if you're talking about violence in the movies *Natural Born Killers* always comes up but I don't think there was actually much violence in it"
- P2: "showing there's violence in everything you turn on on television" (*Stone's aim in Natural Born Killers*)
- P4: "if it go into the hands of children there would be a problem because of the constancy and level of violence in it was really high"
- P5: "I suppose there's loads of violence in films because that's what people want to watch"

Nil By Mouth (Oldman, 1997)

"Oldman doesn't sentimentalise his characters: brute force personified, Ray Winstone is monstrous, but he's also presented as the natural and inevitable product of his environment. Returning to his South London roots, Oldman's script and relentlessly probing camera dare to tell it like it is. It's a squalid, raw and frequently shocking experience, but there's also honesty, humour, and a sheer vitality here which light up the screen." (Tunney, 1998: 62)

- P2: "I could actually believe that could happen .. there are people who are like that in every town everywhere in the world and that's how they live their lives nothing changes"
- P2: "I knew that happened in the film before I saw it [. .] right at the beginning when he's ordering drinks you know he's capable of violence because of his short temper .. there's not much violence in the film but you're expecting it to happen at any moment even when he turns up when she's playing pool .. he takes her away and you think it's going to be later now"

Once Were Warriors (Tamahon, 1994)

"Beth (Rena Owen) has been married to her drunken husband Jake (Temuera Morrison) for fifteen years and still loves him, even though his frequent violent outbursts have a devastating effect on both her and her family. Her children are rediscovering the Maori identity that that Jake has rejected in favour of drink." (Karney, 1997: 859)

- P5: "that was a horrible thing to watch that was one of the most very disturbing I thought"
- P6: "the character was getting drunk and always taking his anger out on his wife and the way that was portrayed it disturbed me quite a lot because that sort of thing happens a lot and I could relate to that myself .. that film will always stick in my mind"

Platoon (Stone, 1986)

"Platoon is the first movie about the war in Vietnam made by a veteran of that conflict [. .] The movie reflects his own experience, with Charlie Sheen cast as a callow 'grunt' (and Stone's alter ego) over whom two sergeants, nice Willem Defoe and nasty Tom Berenger, fight a moral battle." (Karney, 1997: 763)

- P3: "it was very well done and it was telling a true story"
- P7: "I should imagine the violence is quite realistic .. people do do things in violent situations probably that they wouldn't do again"

Pulp Fiction (Tarantino, 1994)

"Four interlocking stories with unexpected twists involve a gangster, his two hitmen, his wife, a mysterious briefcase and a boxer who refuses to throw a fight after being paid to do so. Clever,

witty, violent celebration of junk culture, drawing rather too heavily on past thrillers but blessed with some excellent performances which crackle with menace." (Walker, 1997: 623)

- P3: "I found it shocking but also moderately satisfying"
- P8: "I didn't like the violence and the fact that they were always shooting and there was blood splattered everywhere"
- P8: "one scene [*male rape*] I couldn't watch it again because I thought it was so bad [. . .] I thought it was really sick and why would anyone want to watch that sort of thing and I didn't .. I like to dwell on the nicer side of life I know these things go on but I don't really want to think that they go on"
- P8: "I get really involved when I'm watching and I can't decide to myself that this isn't real"
- P8: "I don't like it it turns my stomach I think it's horrid"
- P8: "I know these things go on but I don't want to think that they go on that brings it home the realities that these poor lads to get raped and these things do happen to people I think to me it's real on the screen and I want to hide from it .. I want to think that everybody's nice .. they're not really"
- P9: "when there's blood all over the wall"
- P9: "I've never seen John Travolta in a violence film so I thought it must be good .. I enjoyed it really to tell you the truth I had a good laugh I thought it was quite funny it didn't upset me at all [. . .] I didn't mind that"
- P9: "I watched it and I thought it was a bit gruesome but you had to laugh there was a break in it it wasn't just continual blood blood blood and the rest of it"
- P9: "I had a good laugh I thought it was quite funny"
- P9: "now that was a bit better .. even though it started at the end"
- P10: "shocking .. pretty disgusting" (*male rape scene*)
- P10: "accident .. is it violence?"
- P10: "the needle in the chest" (*overdose*)
- P10: "I don't know it wasn't really nice to see it [*car scene*] [. . .] it upset me really [*male rape*]"
- P10: "I thought that was pretty disgusting I felt for the guys really [. . .] it's really shocking it's different it's shocking [. . .] I thought the male rape scene was more shocking because I'd never thought about that but seeing a woman getting gang raped it upset me really because you could imagine yourself in that position"
- P11: "white wall covered in blood"
- P11: "I thought it was a good film actually [. . .] yes, I enjoyed it"
- P13: "bloodshed [. . .] blood and guts"

Reservoir Dogs (Tarantino, 1992)

"While one of their number bleeds to death after a bungled robbery, the rest of the gang, hiding out in a warehouse, try to discover what went wrong. Brilliant, if sometimes repellent, gangster movie; notably violent, it is also a tense and exciting examination of male egos on a collision course." (Walker, 1997: 643)

"*Reservoir Dogs* is sickeningly violent, appallingly funny and arrestingly accomplished." (Karney, 1997: 828)

P4: "the leader of the group [*film studies course*] asked at the end if anyone could say they enjoyed it and I found I had enjoyed it almost on an intellectual level but with detachment from the violence within it because it stood up quite well as a film"

P4: "the ongoing injuries of one person [. . .] that was realistic and how it is"

P4: "I saw it a second time on video and didn't enjoy it as much and revised my opinion .. you cannot condemn films simply because they are shocking .. if a film makes you go away and think about a situation it can be a valid thing"

P4: "the scene where Michael Madsen cuts off someone's ear although it was unpleasant to watch I didn't have a large problem with it because it was an exploration of the psyche of the character"

P5: "implicit violence"

P5: "In *Reservoir Dogs* that bloke gets shot in the stomach and he's lying there for 2 days or whatever and you can believe that would happen"

P5: "*Reservoir Dogs* that's much more violent .. it's more believable .. all the stuff like that in *Reservoir Dogs* you can believe that could actually happen"

P6: "it wasn't entertaining it was a waste of a film budget"

P6: "two hours of mindless violence so in that case there was no need to it [. . .] I didn't get it [. . .] it does tell a story but I don't know what it was .. when I came away I just saw blood and no story line"

P6: "in *Lethal Weapon* you knew it wasn't going to happen and it probably wouldn't in *Reservoir Dogs* but at least in *Lethal Weapon* there's a story and you can relate to the characters in it"

P9: "I watched half of it and I thought it was silly awful I thought it was unreal"

P9: "I didn't like the dialogue .. it was daft as far as I'm concerned I didn't understand it [..] maybe I should have watched it"

P9: "I didn't understand it .. I couldn't understand it it didn't start .. I didn't understand it at all"

Scarface (de Palma, 1981)

"Absurdly brutalised version of [Howard Hughes' 1932 film], with detailed violence and a superabundance of foul language. *Scarface* has now become an emigré Cuban, and the film seems to want to make a political statement." (Walker, 1997: 675)

P2: "necessary to the plot"

- P4: "easier to cope with if it is explained by the plot"
- P4: "these films are fairly serious films explaining an age and a group of people who lived at that time"
- P5: "helps the storyline"
- P5: "glued to the screen and it's interesting to watch"
- P6: "there is a need for it in that type of film"
- P6: "the scene where the bloke gets chainsawed up I thought was disgusting"
- P8: "you're actually showing what went on and if you don't show the violence then you're not being true to the story because that's the way they did things"

Schindler's List (Spielberg, 1993)

"Based on Thomas Keneally's novel about Oskar Schindler, who rescued over 1000 Jews from gas chambers by employing them in his munitions factory. Spielberg pays an unforgettable homage to survival, re-creating history with power and restraint." (Karney, 1997: 841)

"During the Second World War, an Austrian businessman persuades the Nazis to let him use Jewish slave labour in his factory; and then, with the money he earns, bribes a brutal SS Commandant to save 1,100 Jews from concentration camps." (Walker, 1997: 677)

- P2: "Showing that a character is capable of violence"
- P5: "I've done a course recently on it so I knew a lot about it already and I find it interesting in a dark kind of way to see what people are capable of"
- P5: "that's quite a disturbing a very disturbing film actually [. .] 6 million people killed 6 million people it's not easy to realise you can't .. the way he concentrates on a certain few it makes you think and even when you're watching it you're thinking this is rough and afterwards you get time to think that this really happened"
- P5: "the way they showed it on the film was really good they could have glorified it and that would have really ruined the film so keeping it real made it good in a way"
- P10: "that touched me I was crying my eyes out when I watched that [. .] it was a brilliant film but it was I don't know very sad wasn't it .. seeing all the Jews getting gassed and tortured and I didn't enjoy that very much .. that film's probably had more of an effect on me than any other film because it happened and it was quite disturbing .. but as far as *Pulp Fiction* and other films like that I don't tend to take it seriously .. but if it's a true story and you know it's a true story then I get quite upset"

Scream (Craven, 1996)

"A knowing romp through the conventions of slasher movies, but one that also manages to scare as well; it is most likely to appeal to those familiar with the genre, who will appreciate its parodies." (Walker, 1997: 678)

- P3: "it's when violence leads to violence [. .] I do think it's possible there was a case this week (*children in Japan killed their parents wearing the mask from Scream*) .. that was a one off and shouldn't be taken as a specific reason to stop showing violence in movies"

Seven (Fincher, 1995)

"A detective nearing retirement and his temperamental young replacement track down a serial killer who is working his way through the seven deadly sins. A tense, involving thriller that rises above the somewhat predictable schematics of its screenplay and its central situation to reach a surprisingly downbeat conclusion; it depicts the city as a paradise lost, and its inhabitants as mostly beyond redemption." (Walker, 1997: 686).

- P2: "it was psychological in *Seven* I couldn't sleep after seeing that film .. that's the first film I've seen where I really thought about the characters how they are going to be now because they'd been that well portrayed during the film you really thought how are they going to deal with that incident that happened at the end is going to be with them for the rest of their lives .. it fucked my head up a bit because it was psychological he [*Spacey*] knew what he'd done and he knew Brad Pitt wanted to kill him and he wanted him to .. Pitt was having his revenge and he knew it would be with him for the rest of his life but he knew he had to do it .. it was psychological violence"
- P2: "what is psychological about it is they find the bodies and what has happened and they work out how they died you think about how it's happened and how somebody could do that to somebody else and it's that strong that without seeing you're really thinking about what's going on [. . .] each murder stayed with you and it's the sort of film you think about"
- P2: "something like *Seven* hopefully it could never happen but the way it's performed is as if it could happen"
- P2: "I don't think it would have fitted in the tone of the film .. it would have ruined it and made it too exploitative .. it would have been like one of those crinkly [sic] horror films more gratuitous" (*if shown the head in the box in Seven*)
- P8: "the idea of showing it on the screen was disgusting [. . .] the last part when you realise he's killed his wife that's disgusting I just don't find it entertaining [. . .] I can't understand why people enjoy watching that sort of thing some people like to be frightened they enjoy the thrill of it I don't like it it turns my stomach .. I think it's horrid"

Shallow Grave (Boyle, 1994)

"twenty-something flat-sharing friends in Edinburgh, get into dark concealment and bloody corpse dismemberment with great style." (Karney, 1997: 856)

- P10: "smashing guy's legs up"

Silence of the Lambs (Demme, 1990)

"Dr. Hannibal 'the Cannibal', a once eminent psychiatrist turned serial killer, as brilliantly portrayed by Anthony Hopkins, is bound to stay in audience's heads. Tautly directed by Jonathan Demme, this gripping and eerie psychological thriller largely manages to avoid sensationalism. The best scenes are the confrontations between the caged Hopkins and Foster, she regarding him with morbid fascination as he unblinkingly plays an intricate game of cat and mouse with her." (Karney, 1997: 813)

- P2: "sometimes when you're watching a film your expectations are built up and you know something horrible is going to happen fairly soon and it happens"

and it is but when you watch it over and over again there doesn't seem to be much to it"

***Sleepers* (Ballhaus, 1996)**

"With the aid of a journalist and a lawyer, two petty gangsters get away with the murder of a sadistic guard who abused the four of them when they were teenagers in a reform house. Allegedly based on a true incident, this nevertheless has the insubstantiality of pulp fiction, as just another example of the modern cycle of unacceptable, amoral vigilante thrillers." (Walker, 1997: 707)

P3: "what disturbs me as a watcher is characters being put through a situation that they're going to have to live with for the rest of their lives .. it's the concept of knowing there are people out there who have had their lives radically changed and yet who carry on living is probably more brutal because you put yourself in the same position and think I don't know if I could live with that"

***Taxi Driver* (Scorsese, 1976)**

"A lonely Vietnam veteran becomes a New York taxi driver and allows the violence and squalor around him to explode in his head. The epitome of the sordid realism of the 70s, this unlovely but brilliantly made film haunts the mind and paints a most vivid picture of a hell on earth." (Walker, 1997: 757)

"Indeed, *Taxi Driver* is probably the most violent film seen at Cannes, although it is a just reflection of that which confronts America today." (Karney, 1997: 658)

P10: "I thought it was very well acted put across very well"

***The Terminator* (Cameron, 1984)**

"An android from the future is sent back to the present time on a mission of extermination. Slick, rather nasty but undeniably compelling comic book adventures." (Walker, 1997: 761)

"relentless, hi-tech science fiction thriller" (Karney, 1997: 743)

P2: "fantastical violence"

P3: "it's not disturbing because it's beyond reality"

P4: "I don't have a problem with violence in films if it's legitimate within the scheme of the plot [. . .] a lot of people had trouble with Tim Roth's character [*in Reservoir Dogs*] and the pool of blood getting bigger but I thought that was realistic and how it is .. I have less of a problem with that then with something like *The Terminator* where life is very cheap and people just get blown away two a penny"

P4: "I find violence the harder in a way [. . .] I would not be interested in the subject matter .. the violence is so constant it becomes ordinary [. . .] that is more disturbing than a close study of individuals and their violence and maybe where it's coming from .. when a violent scene is justified within a plot it is easier to cope with"

P8: "realms of fantasy"

P8: "I liked that because that's not real [. . .] there wasn't going to be someone like the Terminator walking down the street so I don't mind them .. it's not real the others [*Pulp Fiction*] could be real well they do happen"

P9: "it wasn't real I don't think it was real"

P9: "that was Saturday afternoon stuff to me it wasn't a dangerous film I thought it was just a silly film"

P9: "I watched it and forgot about it [. .] it didn't tell a story"

***Tomorrow Never Dies* (Spottiswoode, 1997)**

"*Tomorrow Never Dies* is responsibly formulaic: there is the spectacular pre-credit sequence (actually disappointing here); the guns, girls and gadgets; the action set-pieces in exotic locations; and the explosive ending which resolves an international conflict." (Arroyo, 1998: 53)

"P3: "Tarantino does it in a good way because when someone gets shot they don't fall down with a neat little hole in their head and lie down and go ugh I'm dead blood goes everywhere the car's a mess and half the thing is about clearing up the mess from the murder .. it's not sanitised it's not made clean it is as gory as it really is .. going back to James Bond when he hits someone they don't scream for hours because their jaw's broken they just fall down and the next time the camera pans round they've completely disappeared .. it's too sanitised it's too clean [. .] he says [*Tarantino*] let's look at violence if you cut someone blood goes over here he lies about saying it's hurting and it's great he's not making it pretty this is how nasty life can be if you start playing around with knives and guns"

P3: "where violence and discomfort hits an audience is when it could be you and your house [. .] it's the individual .. if you took the individual and said I'm going to break your little finger you would scream for hours whereas films like *Tomorrow Never Dies* not only is he in 17 different fist fights he isn't bruised he isn't injured"

P8: "escapist rubbish"

***Trainspotting* (Boyle, 1996)**

"A dark and ironic take on young junkies at their antisocial worst, directed with terrific energy and style, a witty subversion of the usual documentary approach to such subjects, and excellently acted by its ensemble cast." (Walker, 1997: 795)

P2: "then he [*Renton*] gives drugs to Tommy and you see what he's capable of doing .. then he catches something from the cat and that bloke says the cat's fine and everyone laughed but I thought that was beyond laughter it didn't lighten the mood at all .. it wasn't funny at all it didn't detract from the seriousness at all"

P3: "I would feel far more outraged by something like *Trainspotting* taking heroin .. I wouldn't know how to take heroin but I've seen someone with a spoon heating stuff up and I've got that information from television .. there are people who are suffering from peer pressure and they will buy some heroin and now they have been given this information .. *Trainspotting* was supposed to say what a miserable life it is but that message didn't get across it is still glorifying .. in a way it's a moral rape of our society that we are allowed to show people ruining themselves and depict it as being an acceptable way forward"

P4: "the bit I found the most disturbing was the baby scene where the child had been left in the cot [. .] I could see why that was there although it was difficult to watch"

P4: "there was a debate at the time about whether *Trainspotting* actually glamorised taking heroin but me and my partner who is a teacher both

thought that it wasn't at all glamorising drugs .. he said it would be nice if that was a film he could show in tutor groups to hopefully have the opposite reaction rather than it was a glamorous life"

P9: "I really wanted to watch it but I was out at the time .. it was real that's why I wanted to watch it [. . .] I like watching film that are real and things can happen because that sort of thing can happen"

P10: "I thought it was a bit overrated but they are aren't they but yes overall I thought it was a good film"

P10: "to be honest I thought he were dead funny [*Begby*] he was just really amusing [. . .] to be honest I took it fairly light-heartedly [. . .] I think they did the character really well"

P10: "I thought it was quite a funny film actually"

P11: "Begby .. but a bit over the top"

P11: "there's definitely people like him knocking about [*Begby*]"

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (Luhmann, 1996)

"In modern day Verona Beach, two young lovers suffer from family opposition to their affair. The poetry of the play tends to get lost in the ethnic mix and loud rock accompaniment, and it dazzles the eye with its vivid, kitsch settings, rather than the ear, but the updating has been thought through with an invigorating invention that sweeps objections aside." (Walker, 1997: 851)

P1: "gratuitous violence is that which is totally ridiculous but is attempting to reflect reality .. I think futuristic films that display the world as simply violence are gratuitous and portray a naïve view of the future .. if something is ridiculous but is not attempting to reflect reality then it is not gratuitous like *Romeo and Juliet* [. . .] the violence in *Romeo and Juliet* was valid because it showed the senseless results of groundless family bickerings and it shows the tragedy of young men killing each other for no reason except their fathers' arguments .. the violence was justified because it was in proportion to the message that was being portrayed"

Coronation Street (Granada Television)

P11: "everything has to have violence unfortunately and to use a very bad example even *Coronation Street* has to have Ken Barlow and Mike Baldwin scuffling in the bar [. . .] you have to have your token bit of violence in it now"

The News

P2: "if you see something on the news your reaction is different because it's something that's really happened .. you can differentiate between what's in a film even a true story because it's sensationalised and real life"

Sybil (made for TV; Petrie, 1976)

P8: "I watched this programme on television about a girl who was abused by her mother her mother did horrible things to her she used to push things inside her and I was just horrified .. I sat there gripping my hand thinking how can someone behave like that [. . .] I wanted to turn it off because I

was thinking this is awful but I couldn't because I wanted to know what happened"

Tom and Jerry (Walt Disney)

- P2: "in this country they ban films because of what might happen not what has actually happened .. they try to attribute everything that happens in society to a film and that's ridiculous in my opinion because if you're going to do that you may as well ban *Tom and Jerry* cartoons because that's the most violent thing you see on television"

The X files

- P1: "it was justified because it was a dramatisation it was a good reflection of a real life situation"
- P1: "I didn't allow my children to see it because it's not something they're likely to see and so I don't see why they should be educated in it"

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4.7 Discourse Analysis

The interpretative phenomenological analysis in Study 2 discovered that many participants referred to existing discourses when speaking about their experiences of and opinions about film violence. As a result a discourse analysis, included in full below, was conducted on various texts, including newspapers, film magazines, and scientific literature.

The discourses identified are divided into popular and scientific discourses. Relevant extracts from the literature are included in order to illustrate the nature of these discourses. There is a large degree of overlap, however, revealing that access to both sets of discourses is widespread within contemporary culture.

Popular Discourses

TV/Film Culture

"crime genre" (Dargis, 1994)

"a big kick-ass movie" (Dargis, 1994)

"I don't want to be the gun guy" (Dargis, 1994)

"gangster movie" (Dargis, 1994)

"masters of violence" (Sigal, 1993)

"Romeo and Juliet-on-the-road movie" (Sigal, 1993)

"the movie/comic book/TV culture" (Sigal, 1993)

"peppering the narrative with bloody killings" (Sigal, 1993)

"coldly executed" (Sigal, 1993)

"a core of stupefying brutality" (Sigal, 1993)

"trash, junk culture" (Sigal, 1993)

"I'm 30, we grew up through the Seventies. The number one thing we all shared wasn't music, that was a Sixties thing. Our culture was television and movies too. TV was what we all shared completely, passionately. It's a shared memory and language." (Sigal, 1993)

"I can't remember a positive thing about America at the time. All the images growing up were pollution, crazy inflation ... serial killers were rampant. Things were falling apart." (Sigal, 1993)

"His "father" was the multi-headed Hollywood patriarchy that produced the violence-drugged entertainment that shaped the dreams of so many young men and women who feel alone, stripped, terrified, but miserably, electrically alive." (Sigal, 1993)

"Women, guns, drink, drugs or just general self-obsession" (Coles, 1997)

"But from an early age Quentin had spent his life in front of the screen, mouth open, absorbing every credit" (Coles, 1997)

"Tarantino specialises in conjuring up a hard, brutal world of the imagination" (O'Hagan, 1994)

"the now infamous "ear-slicing scene" in which a suitably chilling Michael Madsen performs some brutal psycho-surgery [. . .] It has already become one of the key images of Nineties cinema and, more than any other scene, exemplifies Tarantino's talent for surreal, often disturbing, juxtapositions." (O'Hagan, 1994)

"he is a connoisseur of the trash aesthetic" (O'Hagan, 1994)

"the *enfant terrible* of cinema" (Alderson, 1995)

"extraordinarily violent" (Dargis, 1994)

"The highly stylised blood-letting of Woo's movies, and all the ways in which bullets and bodies move" (Dargis, 1994)

"The murder of the child in *Face/Off* is, in contrast, calculated not to amuse but to appal; it's an unspeakable tragedy not only because it destroys an innocent, but because it comes close to destroying a family and unleashes waves of wholesale destruction. But while the extremity of the destruction at times suggests Ancient Greece - an intimation borne out by the mythological names Castor and Pollux - the ways in which the devastation swamps the narrative and the characters is overwhelmingly Hollywood. Throughout *Face/Off* the effect is the same: vaguely real characters - an unhappy wife, a rebellious teenage daughter - are introduced for emotional effect only to be summarily whisked off screen to make way for another burst of gunfire, another fallen soldier, another radiant catastrophe." (Dargis, 1994)

"Poor Stone is not only everyone's favourite hero or villain for *Natural Born Killers*: he has the distinction, according to French, of making in *JFK* the "only mainstream Hollywood snuff movie, featuring in the Zapruder footage a real, famous exploding head"." (Dworkin, 1996)

Fascination with Violence

"I want to set up a situation you've seen a zillion times before and then throw in real-life kicking and screaming so that it fucks up everybody's plans." (Dargis, 1994)

"it's the reality of it that is both totally freaky and totally funny." (Dargis, 1994)

"designer brutality" (Sigal, 1993)

"splat-gore films" (Sigal, 1993)

"The climax is, in *Reservoir Dogs*, a bloody, yet funny, shootout" (Sigal, 1993)

"He is fascinated, even transfixed, by violence" (Sigal, 1993)

"most violent incidents that happen to people are shocking and horrific, but almost humorous in their absurdity" (Sigal, 1993)

"a core of stupefying brutality" (Sigal, 1993)

"aesthete of violence" (Sigal, 1993)

"we are hooked. The gun violence on our streets, against which we are defenceless, we gladly promote, as customers or producers, on screen." (Sigal, 1993)

"Funny, thrilling and so unabashedly violent it both shocks you and leaves you giddy at your capacity for shock" (Entertainment Weekly, cited in Coles, 1997)

"Scenes like the one describe above [Travolta shooting up heroin in *Pulp Fiction*], where humour and horror coalesce, make for compulsive, if uncanny, viewing" (O'Hagan, 1994)

"the now infamous 'ear-slicing scene' in which a suitably chilling Michael Madsen performs some brutal psycho-surgery [. . .] It has already become one of the key images of Nineties cinema and, more than any other scene, exemplifies Tarantino's talent for surreal, often disturbing, juxtapositions." (O'Hagan, 1994)

"When Tarantino shifts from romance to terror, he is in a contemporary class of his own. The scene's denouement is not for the faint-hearted, but its evocation of utter panic combined with drug-addled farce make it the most visceral moment in the film." (O'Hagan, 1994)

"all I'm trying to do is merge sophisticated storytelling with lurid subject matter" (O'Hagan, 1994)

"And after viewers had sat glued to the ultimate in TV reality, all Hollywood began asking: who will make the movie?" (White, 1997)

"the addiction to Tarantino's violent films among young Mancunians" (Alderson, 1995)

"they love the harsh realism and black humour of Tarantino's work." (member of the public, cited in Alderson, 1995)

"relish the cocktail of violence and black humour" (Alderson, 1995)

"the violence is comic book stuff after every piece of violence there is something funny" (member of the public, cited in Alderson, 1995)

"If, in the 1990s, violence has become the new sex in terms of respectability, Haneke's film is a single-minded deconstruction of what it means to sit and watch terrible things done by human to human. In *Funny Games* the violence is seen to hurt. And we, the spectators, collude in it because the *Funny Games* here have as much to do with the "pact" that we make as spectators as they do with the murderous antics of Haneke's pair of home-invading psychopaths." (Darke, 1997)

"The murder of the child in *Face/Off* is, in contrast, calculated not to amuse but to appal; it's an unspeakable tragedy not only because it destroys an innocent, but because it comes close to destroying a family and unleashes waves of wholesale destruction. But while the extremity of the destruction at times suggests Ancient Greece - an intimation borne out by the mythological names Castor and Pollux - the ways in which the devastation swamps the narrative and the characters is overwhelmingly Hollywood. Throughout *Face/Off* the effect is the same: vaguely real characters - an unhappy wife, a rebellious teenage daughter - are introduced for emotional effect only to be summarily whisked off screen to make way for another burst of gunfire, another fallen soldier, another radiant catastrophe." (Dargis, 1994)

Violence and the Media

"every time you try to show gore realistically, it looks absurd, operatic. People go on about Tim Roth bleeding to death in 'Reservoir Dogs,' but that's reality. If someone is shot in the stomach, that's how they die." (Dargis, 1994)

"media backlash" (Kermode and Floyd, 1995)

"Last October, the man who brought New Violence to Hollywood in his mini-masterpieces *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*, reportedly turned violent himself, slamming the head of a former colleague against the wall of a restaurant." (Coles, 1997)

"With an uncanny eye for the right subject at the right time, he had just finished the screenplay for another movie about violent youngsters, *Natural Born Killers*, when the whole debate about Hollywood's portrayal of violence erupted. At one stage it was so heated it even looked like government controls might be introduced to restrict what could actually be shown." (Coles, 1997)

"the current crown prince of controversy" (O'Hagan, 1994)

"The voyeurism of the violence, he says, seems to appeal to his audience and the fact that with *Reservoir Dogs* it had been ruled unfit for video viewing" (member of the public, cited in Alderson, 1995)

"Since the attempts to censor David Cronenberg's *Crash* any film which attempts to tackle sex and violence feels threatened with a ban. Chris Darke examines offerings at the London Film Festival whose controversy might outweigh their worth." (Darke, 1997)

"a provocative film" (Darke, 1997)

"*Screen Violence* is more than anything a referendum on film violence: who likes it, who does not, and which scenes of blood and gore are the rave faves among the cognoscenti." (Dworkin, 1996)

"trivialises film and film violence" (Dworkin, 1996)

Glorification of Violence

"connoisseur of cruelty" (Sigal, 1993)

"At the Hollywood crossroads where guilty laughter and sadistic brutality merge" (Sigal, 1993)

"sensation, and sensationally cruel, debut film, *Reservoir Dogs*, a heist-pic full of marvellous dialogue and near-psychotic violence." (Sigal, 1993)

"relentless violence" (Sigal, 1993)

"bullets, blood, sadism" (Sigal, 1993)

"we are hooked. The gun violence on our streets, against which we are defenceless, we gladly promote, as customers or producers, on screen." (Sigal, 1993)

"His 'father' was the multi-headed Hollywood patriarchy that produced the violence-drugged entertainment that shaped the dreams of so many young men and women who feel alone, stripped, terrified, but miserably, electrically alive." (Sigal, 1993)

"In *Reservoir Dogs* Quentin Tarantino was accused of glamorising violence. Now it's drugs" (O'Hagan, 1994)

"I ask him if he's ready for the inevitable accusations that he's glamorising hard-drug use. 'I don't buy this whole idea that if you show someone shooting up, you're pro-heroin. That's as silly to me as the arguments I had the last time around about glamorising violence. I've said it before: violence in real life is terrible, violence in the movies can be cool.' [. . .] Nevertheless, I insist, he is portraying cold-blooded killers - one of whom is a connoisseur of heroin - as sympathetic characters. And, his critics would argue, glamorising violence brutality by the gratuitous use of graphic violence. 'I gotta say I can't agree.'" (O'Hagan, 1994)

"Perhaps, I suggest, that's the whole point: his films blur the moral focus so much that people leave the cinema sympathising with killers and creeps and remembering the ultra-violence because it's so stylishly delivered." (O'Hagan, 1994)

"The pro-violence essays seem to be filled with nostalgic, often rapturous remembrances of bloody, deadly scenes in bloody, deadly movies." (Dworkin, 1996)

Audience Demands

"peppering the narrative with bloody killings" (Sigal, 1993)

"And after viewers had sat glued to the ultimate in TV reality, all Hollywood began asking: who will make the movie?" (White, 1997)

"The violence is realistic and gritty, it's done with a bit of panache. It has never been portrayed like this in films before." (member of the public, cited in Alderson, 1995)

"The question I want to ask is: why do people wish to see violent movies? It is only once we discover why watching movies is a popular leisure activity that we can begin to understand the complex emotional responses to viewing violence. Consequently, rather than focusing on the movies themselves, and debating what the body count is in *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1995), it seems logical to ask the consumers of violent movies and see what they have to say about screen violence." (Hill, 1997: 1-2)

Violent Society

"Anybody, anywhere, even in this theatre, could kill us for no reason at all. Tarantino grasps this central fact with terrifying immediacy and drama ... and even with tenderness." (Sigal, 1993)

"He was a poor, ungainly slob with the sort of amiable murder in his heart many of us Americans carry as a response to our Sarajevo-like lives, where murderers are more valued, certainly more admired, than their victims" (Sigal, 1993)

"We deal with a world of lies by violating the world that betrayed us" (Sigal, 1993)

"he is a connoisseur of the trash aesthetic" (O'Hagan, 1994)

"This is the dramatic moment when cops shot dead a back bandit on live TV." (White, 1997)

"An estimated 2,000 rounds were fired during the shootout" (White, 1997)

"The tragedy at Dunblane brought back terrible memories for the people of Hungerford where killer Michael Ryan massacred 16 people." (Young, 1996)

"Along with butchering scripts and terminating directors, plastic surgery is one of the most socially acceptable acts of violence you can commit in Hollywood." (Dargis, 1994)

"Poor Stone is not only everyone's favourite hero or villain for *Natural Born Killers*; he has the distinction, according to French, of making in *JFK* the "only mainstream Hollywood snuff movie, featuring in the Zapruder footage a real, famous exploding head"." (Dworkin, 1996)

"But the *Wild Bunch* (produced in 1969, seen by McCallion in 1975) showed violence in a way that intersected with his own violent life." (Dworkin, 1996)

Too Much Violence in the Media

"Recently, a national violence summit was held to denounce the usual suspects and plead with television networks to slightly cut back on the torrent of blood and guts that seeps through our cathode tubes. What was amazing was the arrogance of the television executives who hardly bothered to plead artistic licence or First Amendment rights before they grudgingly allowed for a possibility, in some remote future, of labelling TV programmes as unfit for children." (Sigal, 1993)

"research by the National Viewers and Listeners Association identified 918 violent assaults, 1,251 gun incidents and 409 attacks involving other weapons in a survey of 265 films shown on mainstream television in the last year." (Poulter, 1998)

"This panel is dancing to the tune of the broadcasters" (Mary Whitehouse, cited in Poulter, 1998)

"Watching this parade of mutilated and violated flesh, it's difficult to believe there remains a single death which hasn't yet been imagined by either Hong Kong or Hollywood; watching *Face/Off* as it chugs from fight to fight, death to death, false ending to false ending, it's equally difficult to believe that at some time soon the movies won't have fully exhausted fictional screen violence." (Dargis, 1994)

"There is too much violence on television" (Report of the Commission of Broadcasting, 1962)

Research conducted to discover the extent of violence on television (Docherty, 1990; Heath, Jowell and Curtis, 1985)

Knee Jerk Response

"specific proposals to cut TV violence" (Virginia Bottomley, cited in Poulter, 1998)

"But the group has instead given programme makers carte blanche - provided they broadcast warnings." (Poulter, 1998)

"can it really be true that we are ready and indeed happy to gulp down any old tripe if it comes via the medium of the small screen? It's a very common misconception that people believe everything they see." (Dr Seiter, cited in Lacey, 1998)

"Historically, scares about television have always been about brainwashing, particularly of children and women, who are assumed to be more susceptible. But the people who say this are usually men, intellectuals and politicians, who of course have every confidence that they themselves can watch what they like without these effects." (Dr Seiter, cited in Lacey, 1998)

"Dr Tony Charlton says it is "morally convenient" and that it is easier to blame television for society's ills than blame ourselves." (Lacey, 1998)

"Stallone and Arnie have killed dozens of people, she says , but nobody kicks up a fuss about their films." (Alderson, 1995)

"Since the attempts to censor David Cronenberg's *Crash* any film which attempts to tackle sex and violence feels threatened with a ban. Chris Darke examines offerings at the London Film Festival whose controversy might outweigh their worth." (Darke, 1997)

"Grisham [. . .] arguing that "a case can be made that there exists a direct causal link between *Natural Born Killers* and the death of Bill Savage. Viewed another way, the question should be: would [the murderer] have shot innocent people but for the movie?" This is an accurate rendering of one meaning of causality." (Dworkin, 1996)

"On the morning of Wednesday, 13 March 1996, Thomas Hamilton, a middle-aged man with no criminal record, walked into the primary school in the small Scottish town of Dunblane, shot sixteen children and a teacher and the killed himself. It was a deeply disturbing incident and, although there was no evidence that he had a particular interest in watching screen violence, it prompted a rash of commentary condemning the morality of popular film and television." (Murdock, 1997: 67)

The murder of James Bulger and Michael Ryan's murderous behaviour were both linked to films, yet no evidence that they had watched these films was found. "Did this failure produce retractions of the claim? Did any of the newspapers, or Alton, or the other campaigners, admit

they had been wrong? Not one. So urgent is the will to find such a link, it seems, that when an exemplar like this falls apart the response is simply to carry on." (Barker, 1997: 13)

Scientific Discourses

Causal Effects

"Last October, the man who brought New Violence to Hollywood in his mini-masterpieces *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*, reportedly turned violent himself, slamming the head of a former colleague against the wall of a restaurant." (Coles, 1997)

"With an uncanny eye for the right subject at the right time, he had just finished the screenplay for another movie about violent youngsters, *Natural Born Killers*, when the whole debate about Hollywood's portrayal of violence erupted. At one stage it was so heated it even looked like government controls might be introduced to restrict what could actually be shown." (Coles, 1997)

"The pattern is not well-established. A horrific crime occurs. The perpetrators are caught and their trial fails to give any satisfactory answer to the question why. So the cry goes up: find the guilty video." (Edgar, 1997)

"the film *Child's Play III* was "blamed" for the murder of James Bulger" (Edgar, 1997)

"John Grisham is trying to hold Oliver Stone and Warner Brothers legally liable for the killing of his friend Bill Savage by two youngsters who claim to have watched *Natural Born Killers* over 20 times." (Edgar, 1997)

"From blaming crimes on particular works of fiction, it is a small step to blaming fiction particularly for crime. A whole research industry has developed to demonstrate that television and film drama causes violence (the "effects model") or doesn't." (Edgar, 1997)

"Panel ignores pleas for curbs on screen mayhem" (Poulter, 1998)

"Other members of the panel were broadcasters - or from the official watchdog bodies who had been accused of not protecting viewers from violence." (Poulter, 1998)

"Pleas from parents, politicians and viewer groups that television should end its obsession with violence have fallen on deaf ears." (Poulter, 1998)

"A panel of broadcasters and TV watchdogs has decided that no action is needed to curb the death and mayhem on our screens." (Poulter, 1998)

"the notoriously violent films *Natural Born Killers*, *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs*" (Poulter, 1998)

"a more liberal approach to censorship" (Poulter, 1998)

"research by the BSC show 62 per cent of viewers listing violence as their number one concern, and 43 per cent had switched off or changed channels to protect children from unsuitable images." (Poulter, 1998)

"There is little here to encourage those who wish to see an overall reduction in the endless diet of gratuitous violence" (Virginia Bottomley, cited in Poulter, 1998)

"What a monster John Logie Baird unwittingly unleashed. The black box in the corner of the living room is a direct conduit for all the vilest poisons of the twentieth century [. . .] It spews out a constant stream of mindless filth that corrupts the nation's children, turns adult brains to mush, shock frail old ladies, terrifies the family cat etc etc. Or so one might think, given the amount of telly-bashing punditry that goes on." (Lacey, 1998)

"Television is supposed to have a hand in many of the ills of modern society; most notably it is held partially responsible for escalating levels of violence, particularly amongst the impressionable young." (Lacey, 1998)

"People say that if we didn't have television we wouldn't have violence." (Dr Seiter, cited in Lacey, 1998)

"many of his fans are serial-viewers" (Alderson, 1995)

"Of course violence has some role to play in the attraction of his films, but it's hardly the stuff of copycat crime" (member of the public, cited in Alderson, 1995)

"He gets you, makes you think, and his characters have a black, dark edge to them which makes you shiver and laugh" (member of the public, cited in Alderson, 1995)

"The voyeurism of the violence, he says, seems to appeal to his audience and the fact that with *Reservoir Dogs* it had been ruled unfit for video viewing" (member of the public, cited in Alderson, 1995)

"The one question this book's lazy intellectuals want to address is whether or not screen violence is likely to make us more violent because we will imitate it or less violent because we will experience catharsis, a rumour since the Greeks, an orgasmic interior release of tension that harmlessly sates the drive towards violence, presumed to be universal." (Dworkin, 1996)

"Or, as Amis frames the question: "Does screen violence provide a window or a mirror? Is it an effect or a cause, an encouragement, a facilitation?" " (Dworkin, 1996)

"Whitehouse makes the mimetic argument: acts of violence in films are imitated in real life; a diet of television violence increases aggression in children. Both points are factually true, the first attested to by a series of murders, rapes, and assaults spanning three decades, the second by social-science research, which is unequivocal in finding relationship between consumption of violent TV and aggression in kids." (Dworkin, 1996)

"Grisham [. . .] arguing that "a case can be made that there exists a direct causal link between *Natural Born Killers* and the death of Bill Savage. Viewed another way, the question should be: would [the murderer] have shot innocent people but for the movie?" This is an accurate rendering of one meaning of causality." (Dworkin, 1996)

"In a Panorama documentary on a 17-year-old boy who allegedly killed two members of his own family after watching *Natural Born Killers* ten times, Stone (as cited by Whitehouse) claimed that "film is a powerful medium, film is a drug, film is a potential hallucinogen - it goes into your eye, it goes into your brain, it stimulates and it's a dangerous thing - it can be a subversive thing." (Dworkin, 1996)

"My own view is that Stone tried to create an aesthetic dynamic for *Natural Born Killers* that would expose rather than reify violence but failed, partly because of his contempt for the very issues raised by Whitehouse, Medved and Grisham." (Dworkin, 1996)

"When young people see dancing, they want to dance, when they see appetising food, drinks and sweets, they want to buy them. It stands to reason that if they see violence on the screen, they acquire a certain taste for it, even if only unconsciously." (Wertham, 1962, cited in Glucksmann, 1971)

"the overt expression of physical force (with or without a weapon, against self or others) or other compelling actions against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed or actually hurting or killing." (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorelli, 1980: 11). Using this definition, Signorelli, Gross and

Morgan (1982) found in 1979 80.3% of television programmes and 91.9% of weekend programmes contained violence.

Bandura, Ross and Ross's (1961, 1963) "bobo doll" studies found evidence that children imitate violent behaviour watched in filmed material.

Leyens, Camino, Parke and Berkowitz (1975) and Parke, Leyens, West and Sebastian (1977) found evidence for increased aggressive behaviour after exposure to violent television.

Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) found a weak trend between heavy viewing of violent television and aggressive behaviour in a correlation study.

Eron (1963) found a negative correlation between exposure to television and aggressive behaviour, but also found that boys who preferred violent television behaved aggressively at school.

U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Television and Social Behaviour (1972) found "[there is a] preliminary and tentative indication of a causal relation between viewing violence on television and aggressive behaviour" (cited in Howitt, 1986).

Eron, Huesmann, Lefkowitz and Walter (1972) conducted a longitudinal study finding that lack of parental identification and low social status are more effective in producing aggressive behaviour than television. Nevertheless, they concluded that there is a bi-directional relationship between exposure to television and aggression.

Belson (1978) concluded that high television viewing led to 49% more acts of aggression. Yet he also found that exposure to non-violent materials was linked to aggressive behaviour.

"Who says what to whom through what channel with what effect?" (Howitt, 1982: 18)

Effects on Children

"Recently, a national violence summit was held to denounce the usual suspects and plead with television networks to slightly cut back on the torrent of blood and guts that seeps through our cathode tubes. What was amazing was the arrogance of the television executives who hardly bothered to plead artistic licence or First Amendment rights before they grudgingly allowed for a possibility, in some remote future, of labelling TV programmes as unfit for children." (Sigal, 1993)

"research by the BSC show 62 per cent of viewers listing violence as their number one concern, and 43 per cent had switched off or changed channels to protect children from unsuitable images." (Poulter, 1998)

Concern for children expressed by the results of research about the amount of violence shown on television when children may be watching: Himmelweit, Oppenheim and Vince (1968) found 20% of programmes shown when children may watch include violence and aggression and Head (1954) found that 7.6% of films made for children contain acts of aggression or immorality.

Bandura, Ross and Ross's (1961, 1963) "bobo doll" studies found evidence that children imitate violent behaviour watched in filmed material.

Qualified Effects

Berkowitz and Rawlings (1963) adopted the frustration-aggression hypothesis (Dollard et al, 1939) as a result of their findings that viewers of violent television show increased aggression in certain circumstances, such as if they have been previously angered or frustrated.

There are boundaries between having knowledge of violence, the desire to act violently, and actually committing a violent act (Cumberbatch, 1989).

Predisposed to Violence

Eron (1963) found a negative correlation between exposure to television and aggressive behaviour, but also found that boys who preferred violent television behaved aggressively at school.

Eron, Huesmann, Lefkowitz and Walter (1972) conducted a longitudinal study finding that lack of parental identification and low social status are more effective in producing aggressive behaviour than television. Nevertheless, they concluded that there is a bi-directional relationship between exposure to television and aggression.

Anti-Effects

"One journalist told me I could show that while first scene of her overdose to school kids as an anti-drugs movie." (Dargis, 1994)

"Politicians should stop scapegoating violent film and TV. Fictional violence, far from degrading us, allows us to confront extremes of emotion. And that, argues David Edgar, is a basic human need." (Edgar, 1997)

"The pattern is not well-established. A horrific crime occurs. The perpetrators are caught and their trial fails to give any satisfactory answer to the question why. So the cry goes up: find the guilty video." (Edgar, 1997)

"From blaming crimes on particular works of fiction, it is a small step to blaming fiction particularly for crime. A whole research industry has developed to demonstrate that television and film drama causes violence (the "effects model") or doesn't." (Edgar, 1997)

"By concentrating on the possible bad effects of fiction rather than the good, the debate has been conducted the wrong way round." (Edgar, 1997)

"The difficulty comes when we note how much fiction addresses the extremes of life: not just the zeniths, but the nadirs. It's true that fiction often shows acts of wickedness in order to discourage them; but if "go thou and ho likewise" is a crudely simplistic view of the effects of fiction, then so is "don't do this at home"." (Edgar, 1997)

"Mr Denton said it was not his panel's job to recommend less violence and questioned whether it was necessary at all." (Poulter, 1998)

"People were stupid, violent and sentimental before its invention" (Lacey, 1998)

"What a monster John Logie Baird unwittingly unleashed. The black box in the corner of the living room is a direct conduit for all the vilest poisons of the twentieth century [. .] It spews out a constant stream of mindless filth that corrupts the nation's children, turns adult brains to mush, shock frail old ladies, terrifies the family cat etc etc. Or so one might think, given the amount of telly-bashing punditry that goes on." (Lacey, 1998)

"The research we are analysing now shows television's potential for pro-social effects, says Dr Charlton." (Lacey, 1998)

"a two-year study of young British men commissioned by the Home Office and published earlier this year was also unable to find a link between on-screen and off-screen violence." (Dr Charlton, cited in, Lacey, 1998)

"can it really be true that we are ready and indeed happy to gulp down any old tripe if it comes via the medium of the small screen? It's a very common misconception that people believe everything they see." (Dr Seiter, cited in Lacey, 1998)

"Dr Tony Charlton says it is "morally convenient" and that it is easier to blame television for society's ills than blame ourselves." (Lacey, 1998)

"Experimental studies claim to have been able to isolate a universal effect of violence in films, and to be able to assess 'scientifically' the relative merits of the contradictory hypotheses of mimesis (increase in the viewer's aggression) and catharsis (decrease in aggression). In fact, they show something quite contrary: that an enormous amount of complexity and contradiction are obscured by the use of the single term 'violence' to designate the multiple aspects of the dramatic content of films, and of the dynamic factor of conduct." (Glucksmann, 1971: 49)

U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Television and Social Behaviour (1972) found "[there is a] preliminary and tentative indication of a causal relation between viewing violence on television and aggressive behaviour" (cited in Howitt, 1986).

Research has found a decreasing amount of complaints about television broadcasts which relate directly to violence (Docherty, 1990; Gunter and Wober, 1988).

"It is surely no wonder that a bewildered public should regard with cynicism a research tradition which supplies, instead of definitive answer, a plethora of relevant and inconclusive and at this time seemingly contradictory findings." (Klapper, 1960: 3)

"It seems relatively clear [. . .] that the function served by violent media fare are complex, and that the dynamic which results in the audience member's pursuing or avoiding delinquent behaviour is at least equally complex." (Klapper, 1960: 162)

"Did this failure produce retractions of the claim [that murders are linked to particular films]? Did any of the newspapers, or Alton, or the other campaigners, admit they had been wrong? Not one. So urgent is the will to find such a link, it seems, that when an exemplar like this falls apart the response is simply to carry on." (Barker, 1997: 13)

"this circular relationship between empiricist science and common-sense thinking was built into academic work on media 'effects' from the outset. The dominant research tradition adopted the definitions of the 'problem' already established in popular and political commentary. The result was banal science, which failed to ask awkward questions, to pursue other possible lines of inquiry or to placed 'effects' in their social contexts. But because its investigation procedures correspond to common-sense notions of what 'proper' science was - the image of controlled experimentation being particularly central - its 'findings' seems to offer strong confirmation of popular assumptions and anxieties. These, in turn, were anchored in a deep-rooted formation of fear about the precarious balance between anarchy and order in the modern age." (Murdock, 1997: 67-70)

"the media effects research has quite consistently taken the *wrong approach* to the mass media, its audiences, and society in general." (Gauntlett, 1998: 1)

"Surveys typically show that whilst a certain proportion of the public feel that the media may cause other people to engage in anti-social behaviour, almost no-one ever says that they have been affected themselves. This view is taken to extreme by researchers and campaigners whose work brings them into regular contact with the supposedly corrupting material, but who are unconcerned for their own well-being as they implicitly 'know' that the effects will only be on 'other people'." (Gauntlett, 1998: 6)

Desensitisation to Violence

"Beyond that is the widespread (and academically supported) notion that even non-violent fantasy is liable to turn a mere couch potato into a fully-fledged zombie." (Edgar, 1997)

"Other members of the panel were broadcasters - or from the official watchdog bodies who had been accused of not protecting viewers from violence." (Poulter, 1998)

"Television is supposed to have a hand in many of the ills of modern society; most notably it is held partially responsible for escalating levels of violence, particularly amongst the impressionable young." (Lacey, 1998)

"The longer we live with television, the more invisible it becomes. As the number of people who have never lived without television continues to grow, the medium is increasingly taken for granted as an appliance, a piece of furniture, a storyteller, a member of the family [. . .] Television is the source of the most broadly shared images and messages in history." (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorelli, 1986: 17)

Fear of Violent Crime

Ten times more crimes are portrayed on television in America than are reported in real life which is an unrealistic picture of American society (Gerbner, Gross, Signorelli, Morgan and Jackson-Beeck, 1979; Gerber, Gross, Morgan and Signorelli, 1980). Gerbner calls this the "mean world syndrome".

"We have found that the differential ratios of symbolic victimisation among women and minorities on television cultivate different levels of insecurity among their real-life counterparts, a hierarchy of fears' that confirms and tends to perpetuate their dependent status." (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli, 1986: 28)

Violent Drive

"cavemen in the audience" (Sigal, 1993)

"The one question this book's lazy intellectuals want to address is whether or not screen violence is likely to make us more violent because we will imitate it or less violent because we will experience catharsis, a rumour since the Greeks , an orgasmic interior release of tension that harmlessly sates the drive towards violence, presumed to be universal." (Dworkin, 1996)

Pressure Valve

"a pair of murderously funny hired killers" (O'Hagan, 1994)

"As Tarantino says, violence on the streets is one of the worst aspects of everyday life, "but in the movies it's fun"." (Alderson, 1995)

"The one question this book's lazy intellectuals want to address is whether or not screen violence is likely to make us more violent because we will imitate it or less violent because we will experience catharsis, a rumour since the Greeks , an orgasmic interior release of tension that harmlessly sates the drive towards violence, presumed to be universal." (Dworkin, 1996)

Feshbach (1955) found evidence that violent entertainment can reduce aggression, becoming an advocate of the catharsis theory. Ancona (cited in Glucksmann, 1971), Croce (1964) and Mueller, Donnerstein and Mallam (1983) find supporting evidence.

Feshbach and Singer (1971) find evidence in an experimental field study for catharsis, supported by Wells (1973).

Stephenson (1967) found that media entertainment reduces anxiety in those who find the news worrying.

"In that case media consumption should be explained as a part of a positive process of self-development taking place in a series of social situations" (Elliott, 1974: 255).

Existential Needs

"Politicians should stop scapegoating violent film and TV. Fictional violence, far from degrading us, allows us to confront extremes of emotion. And that, argues David Edgar, is a basic human need." (Edgar, 1997)

"The telling and hearing of stories is not an optional extra or a trivial pursuit. It is central to our being as humans. Certain crucial aspects of humanness could not exist without it. The most obvious - and the most obviously benign - is our capacity to imagine other worlds and other times through stories told either from or about them." (Edgar, 1997)

"Because, as critics from Aristotle onwards have noted, we don't just learn, but take pleasure, from seeing the representation of things that in real life we'd regard as disgusting or repellent. It's easy to see why we want to be amused, delighted, moved or aroused in the theatre or cinema; it's harder to understand paying good money to be saddened, shocked, shaken and scared. Yet, above and beyond the call of statistical feasibility, that is precisely what we do and have always done." (Edgar, 1997)

"The notion that fictional violence allows us to acknowledge and accept our own aggressive feelings is not new. [. . .] For adults, too, fictional violence is a way of confronting the dark side of themselves [. . .] drama allows us to look from a place of safety into a mirror, in which we see not the person who would murder their wife, smother their child or put their father out into the storm, but the person who wanted to. In this way, fiction allows us to discuss and confront questions which in real life are too painfully close." (Edgar, 1997)

"When researchers like Annette Hill talk about the active viewer, they are observing how audiences actively explore the alternatives that face recognisable characters in extreme circumstances. Without the capacity to do this we could not cope with the pain we experience in our own lives, or that which we cause to others." (Edgar, 1997)

"Individuals experience basic human needs that may be met through media use or by other patterns of behaviour." (Elliott, 1974: 250)

Boyanowsky, Newton and Walter (1974) and Boyanowsky (1977) found that viewers prefer to violent television programmes when they are themselves faced with personally threatening situations.

Function of Film

"Politicians should stop scapegoating violent film and TV. Fictional violence, far from degrading us, allows us to confront extremes of emotion. And that, argues David Edgar, is a basic human need." (Edgar, 1997)

"The telling and hearing of stories is not an optional extra or a trivial pursuit. It is central to our being as humans. Certain crucial aspects of humanness could not exist without it. The most obvious - and the most obviously benign - is our capacity to imagine other worlds and other times through stories told either from or about them." (Edgar, 1997)

"The difficulty comes when we note how much fiction addresses the extremes of life: not just the zeniths, but the nadirs. It's true that fiction often shows acts of wickedness in order to discourage them; but if "go thou and do likewise" is a crudely simplistic view of the effects of fiction, then so is "don't do this at home". (Edgar, 1997)

"Because, as critics from Aristotle onwards have noted, we don't just learn, but take pleasure, from seeing the representation of things that in real life we'd regard as disgusting or repellent. It's easy to see why we want to be amused, delighted, moved or aroused in the theatre or cinema; it's harder to understand paying good money to be saddened, shocked, shaken and scared. Yet, above and beyond the call of statistical feasibility, that is precisely what we do and have always done." (Edgar, 1997)

"viewers gain pleasure from testing their powers of endurance of screen violence" (Hill, 1997, cited in Edgar, 1997)

"When researchers like Annette Hill talk about the active viewer, they are observing how audiences actively explore the alternatives that face recognisable characters in extreme

circumstances. Without the capacity to do this we could not cope with the pain we experience in our own lives, or that which we cause to others." (Edgar, 1997)

"The paradox of fiction is that by being ultimately irresponsible - imagined causes leading to pretend effects - it teaches us how to understand the implications of our actual actions in the real world." (Edgar, 1997)

"If, in the 1990s, violence has become the new sex in terms of respectability, Haneke's film is a single-minded deconstruction of what it means to sit and watch terrible things done by human to human. In *Funny Games* the violence is seen to hurt. And we, the spectators, collude in it because the *Funny Games* here have as much to do with the "pact" that we make as spectators as they do with the murderous antics of Haneke's pair of home-invading psychopaths." (Darke, 1997)

Uses and Gratifications research began to investigate the function of different media (Herzog, 1940; Suchman, 1942; Wolfe and Fiske, 1949; Berelson, 1949).

Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch's (1974) research developed the study of the function of the media.

Rubin defines uses and gratifications research as: "(1) the social and psychological origin of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (Rubin, 1985: 20).

Perception and Meaning of Violence

"the overt expression of physical force (with or without a weapon, against self or others) or other compelling actions against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed or actually hurting or killing." (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorelli, 1980: 11)

Gunter (1985) uses two definitional perspectives of violence: focusing on the behaviour of the perpetrator, and examining the consequences of violent acts from the victim's point of view.

Gunter (1985) summarises media research by naming two types of studies: those which are programme-based, and those which are audience-based.

Gunter (1985) found that the genre of a television programme is the most significant differentiating factor in the perception of representations of violence in the media.

"The domination of the social legitimisation aspects points to the fact that violence is a social phenomenon and what is considered violent in a society depends on the dynamic social norms and rules within that society." (Sander, 1997: 50)

"Indeed, we have chosen to pose the question differently and instead ask: what women *make* of the violence they see in the media? The underlying aim is to try to probe what representations of violence against women *mean* in their lives." (Schlesinger et al, 1992: 3)

"The question I want to ask is: why do people wish to see violent movies? It is only once we discover why watching movies is a popular leisure activity that we can begin to understand the complex emotional responses to viewing violence. Consequently, rather than focusing on the movies themselves, and debating what the body count is in *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1995), it seems logical to ask the consumers of violent movies and see what they have to say about screen violence." (Hill, 1997: 1-2)

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Appendix 5

Study 3: The Contextualisation of Film Violence

5.1 Participant Campaign Poster

In order to assist the search for participants in Study 3 the following poster was displayed in Student Halls of Residence. The original was in colour and larger than the copy included below.

Natural Born Killers

Research Study

Do you watch films? What do you think about violence in films?
Have you seen the controversially violent *Natural Born Killers*?

**Whatever your experience, you could help me.
I am looking for volunteers to help with my research ...**

All it will entail is watching some clips from *Natural Born Killers* and then talking about them in a group with other volunteers.

It doesn't matter whether you have seen *Natural Born Killers* before or not.
It will all take about 1 hr 30 mins and will be at Villiers Hall. If you would like to help, come and see me, **Rachel Shaw**, and I will give you the full details.

Villiers Hall (B Block 22) 0116 215 8755 rlshaw@dmu.ac.uk

Thank you for your interest.

5.2 Film Violence Questionnaire

All those who enquired about taking part in Study 3 were given a questionnaire to complete before the inquiry groups were arranged. This questionnaire included questions about the film viewing habits of participants, whether or not they had watched *Natural Born Killers*, their availability if they volunteered to participate in an inquiry group, and it also requested personal information. The questionnaire, overleaf, is an exact copy apart from the font is slightly smaller.

Natural Born Killers Study

Film Questionnaire

Distributed by Rachel Shaw, De Montfort University

The purpose of this questionnaire is to invite people (aged 18 years or over) to participate in a research project that will become part of my PhD research.

If you volunteer, the research session will involve watching some clips taken from the film, *Natural Born Killers* (Director: Stone, 1994), followed by a group discussion about what you have watched. The whole thing will last approximately 1 hour 30 minutes. The discussion will be tape recorded for analysis purposes only, no identities will be divulged.

The sessions will take place at Villiers Hall of Residence and I will plan the discussion groups at times that are appropriate for you.

The session to which you are invited will entail:

- watching some clips from *Natural Born Killers*
- you will then be encouraged to engage in a discussion about what you just watched
- it does not matter whether you have seen this film before
- you can leave whenever you like
- if, at any time, you feel that you do not want to take part in the research study I will respect your wishes and not use the information you have given

However:

- the clips you will be watching include scenes of violence and language that you may find offensive, please take this into consideration.

Section A of this questionnaire is intended simply to gain some background knowledge about your film viewing in general. This you may fill in whether or not you wish to partake in the study as a whole.

Section B asks questions about you which will be used to place you into a discussion group with other people similar to yourself. Once this selection process has taken place this information will be detached from the rest of the questionnaire in order to retain anonymity throughout the remainder of the study.

If you have any questions at all please do not hesitate to contact me. Villiers Hall (B Block 22) 0116 215 8755 rlshaw@dmu.ac.uk Thank you in advance.

Yours faithfully

Rachel Shaw

Please turn over to begin the questionnaire...

Section A: Watching Films

- 1) How often do you watch feature length films at the cinema, on rented video, on television? Please tick the appropriate boxes.

	Cinema	Rented Video	Television
Once every month.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Once every two weeks.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Once every week.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Twice a week.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Three or more times a week.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 2) What kinds of films do you prefer to watch? Please tick appropriate boxes.

☐ Action ☐ Comedy ☐ Science Fiction ☐ Detective ☐ War
☐ Romance ☐ Crime ☐ Mafia ☐ Romantic Comedy ☐ Other

- 3) Do you have a favourite film? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, which is it? (If there is not one that stands out, name a few).

.....

What do you like about this/these film(s)?

.....
.....

- 4) Do you have a favourite actor/actress? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, who is it?

.....

What do you like about this actor?

.....

- 5) Do you have a favourite director? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, who is it?

.....

What do you like about this director?

.....

- 6) Is watching films a favourite past time of yours? ☐ Yes ☐ No
What do you enjoy about watching films generally?

.....

.....

What do you dislike about watching films?

.....

.....

7) Have you seen *Natural Born Killers*? ☐Yes ☐No

Where did you see it? ☐Cinema ☐Rented Video ☐Television

Did you enjoy it? ☐Yes ☐No

What did you like/dislike about *Natural Born Killers*?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

Now if you feel that you would like to participate further in this study please fill in Section B. If not you may return the questionnaire as it stands. Section B will be detached once selection for discussion groups has taken place and the information will remain confidential.

X-----

Section B: About You			
8) Full Name:..... Telephone Number:.....			
Address:.....			
Please tick the appropriate box			
9) <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male			
10) <input type="checkbox"/> 18-20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21-25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31-35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41-45 <input type="checkbox"/> 46-50 <input type="checkbox"/> 50+			
11) Marital status: <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Living with Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Separated <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced			
12) Ethnicity (e.g. Asian, White):			
13) Please state your occupation:.....			
15) Please name any academic or vocational qualifications you have achieved:.....			
.....			
16) Please tick when you would be available to take part and state your preferred time if you have one:			
	morning	afternoon	evening
Monday.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....
Tuesday.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....
Wednesday.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....
Thursday.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....
Friday.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....
Saturday.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....
Sunday.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....	<input type="checkbox"/> time.....

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire and volunteering to take part in this study.
Please return to: Rachel Shaw, Villiers Hall (B Block 22).

5.3 Participant Sample

The table below includes the personal details of those who took part in Study 3.

P	Sex	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Marital Status	Seen <i>Natural Born Killers</i> (Yes or No)
3	M	18-20	White	Student	Single	Yes
4	M	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
5	M	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
6	M	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
7	F	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
8	M	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
11	F	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
12	M	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
14	F	18-20	Oriental	Student	Single	No
17	F	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
18	F	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
19	F	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
20	M	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
23	M	18-20	Chinese	Student	Single	No
24	F	18-20	White	Student	Single	No
25	F	18-20	Asian	Student	Single	No
27	M	21-25	White	Student	Single	No
28	M	21-25	White		Single	Yes
32	F	21-25	White	Student	Single	No
33	M	26-30	White	Medical Photographer	Engaged	Yes
34	M	26-30	White	Student	Single	Yes
35	F	21-25	White	Dental Nurse	Engaged	Yes
36	F	26-30	White	Ph.D. Student	Single	Yes
37	F	21-25	White	Prison Service Psychologist	Married	Yes
38	M	18-20	White	Student	Single	Yes
39	M	18-20	White	Student	Single	Yes
40	M	18-20	White	Student	Single	Yes

41	M	21-25	White	Student	Single	Yes
42	F	18-20	White	Student	Single	Yes
43	F	18-20	White	Student	Single	Yes
44	F	18-20	White	Student	Single	Yes
45	F	18-20	White	Student	Single	Yes
46	F	21-25	White	Student	Single	Yes

5.4 Questionnaire Scripts

Below are the questionnaire scripts of participants in Study 3. Some of those who completed the questionnaire decided not to partake in an inquiry group, their data is not included. Participants' responses are reproduced verbatim and they are organised in the order of the questions on the questionnaire (Appendix 5.2).

Section A: Watching Films

1) *How often do you watch feature length films at the cinema, on rented video, on television?*

	<u>Cinema</u>	<u>Rented Video</u>	<u>Television</u>
P3	once every month	once every two weeks	once every week
P4	once every month	once every two weeks	twice a week
P5	once every month	twice a week	twice a week
P6	once every month	once every week	once every week
P7	twice a week		
P8	once every month	once every two weeks	3 + a week
P11	once every month	once every week	once every week
P12	once every month	once every month	once every week
P14	once every month	once every month	twice a week
P17	once every month	once every two weeks	once every week
P18	once every month	once every month	3 + a week
P19	once every month	once every month	once every week
P20	once every two weeks	once every month	once every week
P23	once every month	once every month	twice a week
P24	once every month		once every 2 weeks
P25	once every month	once every two weeks	once every week
P27	once every month	once every month	once every month
P28	once every two weeks	once every two weeks	twice a week
P32	once every month	once every week	3 + a week
P33	once every 3 months	once every 3 months	twice a week
P34	once every month	once every month	once every month
P35	once every 4 months	once every month	3 + a week
P36	once every month	once every two weeks	once every week
P37	once every 3 months	once every two weeks	twice a week
P38	once every month		twice a week
P39	once every month	once every two weeks	twice a week
P40		once every month	once every two weeks
P41	once every week	once every two weeks	twice a week
P42	once every month	once every month	once every two weeks
P43	once every month	once every month	once every month
P44	once every month	once every month	twice a week
P45	once every month	once every month	twice a week
P46	once every month	once every two weeks	once every two weeks

2) *What kind of films do you prefer to watch?*

P	Action	Comedy	Sci-Fi	Detective	War	Romance	Crime	Mafia	Romantic Comedy	Other
3		x					x	x		
4	x	x	x		x		x	x		
5	x	x	x		x					

6	x	x			x		x		x	
7	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
8	x	x	x						x	
11						x		x	x	
12	x	x	x	x						
14		x							x	
17		x				x			x	
18	x	x	x							x
19	x	x		x			x	x		
20	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	
23	x									
24	x	x	x					x	x	
25	x	x					x			
27										x
28		x	x	x		x	x		x	
32	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	
33	x	x	x							
34	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	
35		x		x			x			x
36	x	x				x			x	x
37	x			x			x			
38	x	x	x		x	x			x	
39	x	x					x	x		
40	x	x								
41	x	x	x							
42		x								
43	x	x							x	
44	x	x			x	x				
45		x				x	x		x	x
46		x		x		x			x	

3) Do you have a favourite film? [followed by] If yes, which is it? [and] What do you like about this/these films?

P3 *The Godfather Trilogy, Monty Python and the Holy Grail*
Form of plot, good acting i.e. unconventional, and type of humour [respectively]

P4 *The Untouchables*

- P5 *Blade, Braveheart, Saving Private Ryan*
Superb acting with lots of action
- P6 *The Shawshank Redemption*
Great plot and characters and well narrated by Morgan Freeman
- P7 *Blade Runner, The Graduate*
Stylish, subtly intelligent, funny
- P8 *The Lost Boys*
The subject, the actors, the script
- P11 *Sleepers*
There is a clever plot as well as an element of truth to the film
- P12 *Shawshank Redemption, The Deer Hunter, Scream*
Deep and interesting, makes you think, (apart from *Scream* – mad, funny)
- P14 *Leon*
Has Gary Oldman in it (fave actor) and directed by fave director, Luc Besson.
Incorporates everything: love action comedy
- P17 *Four Weddings and a Funeral, Speed, Dirty Dancing*
Funny, nice looking actors(!)
- P18 *Die Hard*
The action, Alan Rickman – v good, it wasn't too gory
- P19 *Die Hard 3, Brassed Off, Batman Forever*
Storylines/actors
- P20 *The Rock, Shooting Fish*
The Rock – Action, good story, *Shooting Fish* – humour and story
- P23 *Saving Private Ryan, The Rock*
Fast paced action, reasonably good storyline
- P24 *Star Wars, William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare in Love, Dead Poets' Society*
Humour, action, plot development, themes
- P25 *Seven*
It keeps you on your toes and guessing right until the end
- P27 *La Haine*
Gritty reality
- P28 *Star Wars, The 39 Steps*, (any black & white Sunday afternoon type film)
Classic love stories to enjoy on your own or with friends
- P32 *Armageddon*
Action, romance, science fiction element, good looking men
- P33 *Bladerunner*
Special effects, music, the mystery of it, he is hired to kill replicants and it turns out he is one too but this is only suggested in a subliminal way
- P34 No

- P35 *Sliding Doors*, any Alfred Hitchcock film, especially *Rear Window*
Sliding Doors was very cleverly written and all Alfred Hitchcock films are just excellent.
- P36 *Cinema Paradiso*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*
Well made, well written, well shot.
- P37 *Silence of the Lambs*
Intensity of storyline, criss-cross of characters, fact that repeated/several viewings reveal more details/information.
- P38 *Seven*
Good story line which unravels itself with a bitter twist
- P39 *Tremors*
The blend of comedy and harmless action. A classic cheesy B movie
- P40 *Escape to Victory*, *The Commitments*
Escape to Victory is about football. Commitments is very funny and has good acting
- P41 *The Third Man*
A good story superbly told
- P42 No
- P43 *Clueless*, *Toy Soldiers*, *The Lion King*
Clueless and Lion King are light and easy to watch. Toy Soldiers sad with exciting plot
- P44 *Memphis Bell*, Disney films
I like war films that are based on true events. Disney is good whatever age you are. There is something for everyone
- P45 *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*
Film I enjoyed when I was younger
- P46 *The Sound of Music*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*
- 4) Do you have a favourite actor/actress? [followed by] If yes, who is it? [and] What do you about this actor?
- P3 Robert DeNiro
Style of films he is in
- P4
- P5 Mel Gibson
Plays all the parts superbly with correct expressions for the correct emotion
- P6 Al Pacino
He's cool and has a big screen presence
- P7 Johnny Depp
Sensitive portrayal of characters, good looking
- P8 Wesley Snipes, Lea Thompson
Martial arts skills, acting ability (comedian) [respectively]
- P10 No

- P11 Robert DeNiro
He's believable in any role and totally dominates the screen
- P12 No
- P14 Gary Oldman
Adaptability to roles, method-taught, absolute genius!
- P17 Gwyneth Paltrow
Very good at different types of films
- P18 Alan Rickman
(v good looking!) very versatile – good at lots of different roles
- P19 Chris O'Donnell
Very good looking
- P20 Nick Cage
Diversity of roles, manor in roles and nature
- P23 No
- P24 No
- P25 No
- P27 No
- P28 Carry Grant
He's amazing! Versatile and full of expression
- P32 No
- P33 Clint Eastwood
Particularly in westerns, he doesn't say much, cool, calm and collected. Dirty Harry (Do ya feel lucky then go ahead punk make my day)
- P34 No
- P35 Pierce Brosnan in James Bond
The reason being very obvious (v. sexy!)
- P36 Gerard Depardieu, Robin Williams, John Malkovitch, Susan Sarandon, Emma Thompson
Because they can act unlike most of Hollywood!
- P37 No
- P38 Yes
Kevin Spacey
Every film he is in he plays different parts very well
- P39 Yes
Steve Buscemi
He has a funny face and is versatile (in acting)
- P40 Yes

Ray Winston
He's hard and has real presence on film

P41 Yes
Malcolm McDowell (well when he was young and cool anyway)
Bizarre facial expressions

P42 No

P43 No

P44 No

P45 No

P46 Carry Grant

5) *Do you have a favourite director? [followed by] if yes, who is it [and] What do you like about this director?*

P3 Yes
Martin Scorsese
Films are interesting and challenging

P4 No

P5 Yes
Steven Spielberg
His films are put together well and draw you into the movie

P6 No

P7 No

P8 Yes
Jerry Bruckheimer
Standard of films

P11 No

P12 No

P14 Yes
Luc Besson
His vision and ideas and how he tries to incorporate multi-cultural elements

P17 No

P18 Yes
Danny Boyle
Trainspotting/Shallowgrave

P19 Yes
Steve Spielberg
? been very successful, his films are mostly very good

P20 Yes

	James Cameron Range of films, camera work
P23	No
P24	No
P25	No
P27	No
P28	Yes Alfred Hitchcock Fantastic cinematography, innovative and always entertaining
P32	No
P33	No
P34	No
P35	Yes Alfred Hitchcock Everything he does is brilliant
P36	Yes Reteer Wier Interesting films
P37	No
P38	Yes James Cameron Great FX
P39	Yes
P40	Yes François Truffaut He has a quite stunning approach to mise-en-scene
P41	Yes Lindsay Anderson Innovative and engaging direction
P42	No
P43	No
P44	No
P45	No
P46	Alfred Hitchcock

6) *Is watching films a favourite past time of yours? [followed by] What do you enjoy about watching films generally? [and] What do you dislike about watching films?*

- P3 Yes
Suspension of disbelief, seeing things (jobs, ways of life) you wouldn't otherwise see
Bad acting, mundane storylines, self-importance
- P4 Yes
A great way to escape from reality for a few hours
Americans always portray themselves as being superior to everybody else
- P5 Yes
Lets you relax and in a way pull you out of this world into a fictional one
When the film is wrong in situations and these situations are very obvious
- P6 Yes
It takes you somewhere else for a while when you're bored
It's easy to get disturbed and lose the plot, especially if you're not in the mood
- P7 Yes
Escapism, involvement with characters, being told an interesting / funny/ sad story
Unsubtle American, crap Hollywood, big budget, predictable poor script, bollocks
- P8 Yes
Social activity, cheap event compared to night out in town
Certain types of special effects (Blue screen). Cheesey script lines (eg. "I'll be back" – Arnie).
- P11 Yes
Escapist – watching a small piece of someone else's life
If they are too long or particularly tedious
- P12 Yes
Fun, interesting
A lot of them American which is annoying
- P14 Yes
The escapism
The propaganda element and bias of some political films
- P17 Yes
Take your mind off other things – relaxing
Too much boring stuff loads of shootings and fights
- P18 Yes
It's free, sheer escapism
Adverts breaks
- P19 No

The beginning – it nearly always takes too long to get settled into the storyline
- P20 Yes
Get away from it all
Some films are slow and long without reason
- P23 Yes
Entertaining, relaxing
If they are boring and slow
- P24 No

- Escapism
Boring, predictable films
- P25 Yes
Something to do, relaxing, escape from everything
I hate predictable or crap endings, poor acting and comedies which are not funny
- P27 No
Escapism, relaxation
- P28 Yes
Escapism, vicariously live my life through the fantasy of film
Unnecessary violence, gratuitous heterosexual sex scenes
- P32 Yes
Escapism, watching other peoples' lives, emotional stimulation
Gratuitous violence, graphic violence e.g. rape
- P33 Yes
Escapism, fantasy, seeing the plot unfold
Needing the toilet when there's a good bit predictable endings and clichés
- P34 Yes
- P35 Yes
The escapism
- P36 Yes
Escapism, entertainment
Gratuitous violence, bad acting, implausible plots
- P37 No
Ability to switch off and be absorbed into different level of fantasy - detached from real life sometimes.
Sometime storyline is too complex!
- P38 Yes
Easy to watch and pass the time
Obvious endings
- P39 Yes
Relaxing with friends and it's a break, it can make you think
Numb bums after sitting for a while, some films are also poo.
- P40 Yes
You can escape from normal life
If they are too long, like *Dances with Wolves*
- P41 Yes
Entertaining and (occasionally) thought provoking
Having to sit in the same seat for 90 minutes
- P42 Yes
Chance to escape for a few hours
If the film drags or if the storyline is really weak it can be boring
- P43 No
They allow you to get involved especially if good film

Some of them tend to drag on quite a lot knowing what the plot is going to do

P44 Yes
It is a good way to pas the time cheaply and they often mane you think about new perspectives
Sometimes they are false

P45 Yes
Relaxation - break from reality
Films that make you think about things you don't want to

P46 Yes
Relaxing and the escapism

7) *Have you seen Natural Born Killers? [and] Where did you see it? [and] Did you enjoy it? [followed by] What did you like/dislike about Natural Born Killers?*

P3 Yes
Television
No
Like – challenging conventions, trying to make a point
Dislike – Confusing style

P4 No

P5 No

P6 No

P7 No

P8 No

P11 No

P12 No

P14 No

P17 No

P18 No

P19 No

P20 No

P23 No

P24 No

P25 No

P27 No

P28 No

P32 No

- P33 Yes
Cinema
Yes No
Liked the fact that they killed mainly annoying people (who normal people would just curse)
Disliked the in your face violence and the admiration of other characters to Mickey and Mallory's actions
- P34 Yes
Television
- P35 Yes
Television
Yes
It was a good story but very violent. From what I can remember some of the violence was a little gratuitous but this made the film. It wouldn't have been any good otherwise.
- P36 Yes
Television
No
The subject of violence was poorly treated - the central theme was violence but I don't feel that Oliver Stone knew what to do with it - annoying central characters - were we meant to sympathise with them or hate them? Confusing attitude towards violence.
- P37 Yes
Television
Yes
- P38 Yes
Cinema
Yes
Good direction, the mindless violence, Robert Downey Jr character
- P39 Yes
Television
Yes
It was dark and twisted, but I didn't take it too seriously which I thought worked better also Robert Downey Jnr was fantastically funny
- P40 Yes
Television
Yes
Like - acting, editing and action
Dislike - perhaps a little bit far fetched
- P41 Yes
Television
Yes
An engaging story well acted and directed.
The odd cartoons were a bit annoying though (even if they did make a bold cinematic statement)
- P42 Yes
Television
No
Jumpy storyline, disturbing content it was a bit too arty for me
- P43 Yes

- Television
Yes
Liked it as was interesting and made you think but "like" is not an appropriate word for me due to the storyline "watchable" but wouldn't watch it again
- P44 Yes
Television
Yes
It was interesting and it made me think. It was a very cleverly thought out film and had a good approach to the subject
- P45 Yes
Television
Yes
Surreal, different.
Made me feel angry, irritated, frustrated in places
- P46 Yes
Cinema and Television
Yes and No
Preferred it on television because it is not so much in your face - didn't like it at the cinema it was very loud and just a violent film

5.5 Scene-by-Scene Analysis of *Natural Born Killers*

Below is a brief description of all the scenes which make up the key text, *Natural Born Killers*. The three scenes shown to the inquiry group participants are *Scene 1: The Diner*, *Scene 6: Mickey and Mallory murder her parents*, and *Scene 13: Mallory drives to the petrol station*.

Natural Born Killers

(Director: Oliver Stone, 1994; Story by Quentin Tarantino)

Cast of leading characters:

Mickey Knox : Woody Harrelson
Mallory Knox : Juliette Lewis
Wayne Gayle : Robert Downey Junior
Jack Sagnetti : Tom Sizemore
Dwight McClusky : Tommy Lee Jones

[Titles coming up throughout Scenes 1 and 2]

Scene 1: The Diner

Mickey orders some key lime pie, Mallory starts to dance. Some local men arrive and order some beer, one of them flirts with Mallory. Mallory starts fighting this man saying "how sexy am I now?" Mickey joins in, they kill everyone except one man and tell him to tell the police "Mickey and Mallory Knox did it". Mickey and Mallory kiss.

Scene 2: Mickey and Mallory driving in the dark

Mickey and Mallory in a car. They stop. Mallory is dancing. They tell each other they love each other.

[titles end]

Scene 3: Mallory's house in the style of a sitcom

Mallory says she is going out, her father gets mad and sends her to her room. Her mother tells her father to talk nicely in front of Kevin (Mallory's younger brother). It is made obvious that Mallory's father sexually abuses her.

Mickey arrives at the door, he is the "meat man". Mallory comes downstairs and sees Mickey. Mickey says, "you ought to change your name to beautiful" and takes Mallory for a drive.

Scene 4: Prison visiting room

Mallory tells Mickey she can't put up with her father's abuse and Mickey says wherever she goes he will find her.

Scene 5: Mickey's escape

Mickey is working at a labour camp. There is a cyclone and Mickey escapes.

Scene 6: Mickey and Mallory kill her parents

Mickey starts to attack Mallory's father, Mallory joins in and they drown him in the fish tank, Mallory saying the things her father used to say to her when he abused her. Then they go upstairs to kill her mother. Mickey pours petrol over her and Mallory lights her saying, "you never did nothing". Mallory tell Kevin he is free and they drive off.

Scene 7: Mickey and Mallory driving in the dark

Mallory says "I am a new woman now", they kiss.

Scene 8: Mickey and Mallory's Wedding

Mickey and Mallory are on a bridge throwing away Mallory's old things. Mickey proposes, Mallory says yes. They perform their own wedding ceremony. Some people drive past and shout at them, Mickey says, "we ain't killing nobody on our wedding day".

Scene 9: "American Maniacs" television programme

Wayne Gayle tells the story of Mickey and Mallory Knox and their killing spree as they travel along highway 666. There is a reconstruction of them killing a junior police officer and then a famous cyclist.

Scene 10: Editing Room of "American Maniacs"

Clips of young people from around the world making comments about how cool Mickey and Mallory Knox are.

Scene 11: Mickey and Mallory driving in daylight

Mickey asks Mallory if she wants a hostage, Mallory disagrees and asks Mickey if he still finds her sexy.

Scene 12: Motel

Mickey and Mallory talking, kissing, making love. It then becomes apparent that Mickey has taken a woman hostage as he is looking at her whilst making love to Mallory. Mallory gets annoyed and upset, she shouts at him. Flashbacks of Mickey's childhood and his mother shouting at him. Mallory goes out saying "why don't you fuck her". Mickey says "maybe I will".

Scene 13: Mallory at the gas station

Flashbacks of Mallory's father.

Cuts back to Mickey with the hostage for a second.

Mallory drives past a street shooting then stops in a petrol station, she asks the attendant to fill her up and then goes to look at a car. She imagines that the attendant is Mickey. She seduces the attendant. Flashbacks of Mallory's father and of Mallory with Mickey. The attendant realises who Mallory is, she gets up, shoots him, she walks away and drops her knickers on his dead body.

Scene 14: Crime scene

Jack Scagnetti (detective) finds a hair belonging to Mallory Knox on the car in the petrol station.

Scene 15: Mickey and Mallory driving in daylight

There is a police car behind them but they turn left and it doesn't follow them. They are now lost and run out of petrol. Mickey calls Mallory a stupid bitch. Mallory is upset because that is what her father used to call her, they argue.

Scene 16: The Indian's house

Mickey and Mallory walk to find some petrol and come across a hut where an Indian and his grandson live. He takes them in and feeds them. The Indian tells his grandson that Mallory is suffering from a sad sickness. Mickey and Mallory fall asleep. The Indian performs some ritual by the fire. Mickey starts to dream about his childhood. He wakes up and shoots the Indian. The Indian says, "I have been waiting for you". Mallory reprimands Mickey and covers up the Indian out of respect. Mallory walks off as if to leave Mickey but gets bitten by a rattle snake. Mickey carries Mallory then he gets bitten. They realise there are hundreds of rattle snakes all around them and Mickey says "what have we done?"

Scene 17: Mickey and Mallory driving in the dark

[There are many cartoons flashing up, lots more than in previous scenes] The Indian is laughing at them.

Scene 18: Motel

Jack Scagnetti is with a prostitute. He asks her if she has ever been strangled and then attacks and kills her saying "Mickey I'm coming to get ya"

Scene 19: Drugstore

Mickey and Mallory are looking for snake bite antidote. The cashier is watching television and "American Maniacs" is on featuring Mickey and Mallory Knox. The cashier realises that they are in his store and presses the alarm button. Mickey asks the cashier for "snake juice" and sees himself on television. He then notices the alarm and threatens the cashier. The cashier protests that they usually leave one person alive to which Mickey says, "if I don't kill you there's nothing to talk about". Mickey shouts to Mallory to meet him by the car. The police and some journalists are outside. Scagnetti gets Mallory whilst Mickey is shooting at police. Eventually they disarm Mickey and he falls to the floor and all the police start to kick him.

[ONE YEAR LATER]

Scene 20: Prison

Jack Scagnetti meets the prison warden, McClusky, where Mickey and Mallory are being held. McClusky tells Scagnetti about Mickey and Mallory's behaviour whilst in prison. Scagnetti tells McClusky about his mother being killed by a serial killer (flashback) and about his book, "Scagnetti on Scagnetti". McClusky talks about the trouble Mickey and Mallory have caused in the prison and the feeling amongst the inmates, saying, "this ain't a prison anymore Jack it's a time bomb". McClusky tells Jack of their plans to move Mickey and Mallory to a psychiatric institution and that Scagnetti has been chosen as the officer to orchestrate the move. We are led to believe that this is a smoke screen for the murder of Mickey and Mallory Knox.

Scene 21: Mallory's cell

Scagnetti is taken to meet Mallory. When they arrive at her cell she is singing. When she sees them she runs and head butts the door passing out.

Scene 22: Wayne Gayle's visit

Gayle is asking Mickey for a live interview about his and Mallory's murders for his programme, "American Maniacs". Mickey accepts.

Scene 23: Mickey's cell

Mickey is writing a letter to Mallory explaining how he loves her more than ever and that he cannot wait until he can see her again, he talks of holding her, kissing her and of her dancing. Cut to Mallory dancing in her cell.

Scene 24: "American Maniacs" television programme

Wayne Gayle interviews a psychologist who says that Mickey and Mallory are not insane but psychotic and that it is unlikely that they were abused as children.

Scene 25: Wayne Gayle on the phone

Gayle argues with his wife on the phone, she suspects he is having an affair.

Scene 26: Editing Room of "American Maniacs"

Footage of crowds outside the courts for Mickey and Mallory's trial. Mallory says, "I've never had so much fun in my life", Mickey says, "you ain't seen nothing yet".

Scene 27: Prison

Gayle's team are preparing for the interview with Mickey.

Scene 28: Mickey's cell

Mickey shaves his head. Flashback to his childhood.

Scene 29: Prison Interview Room

Gayle's team are preparing for the interview with Mickey.

Scene 30: "American Maniacs" Interview with Mickey Knox

The show begins. Gayle tells the story of Mickey and Mallory Knox so far, he then introduces Mickey Knox to the audience. During the interview Mickey says he came from violence. Gayle asks about his father and Mickey becomes aggressive saying that he didn't kill his father. They change the subject. Mickey is asked how he can kill innocent people but Mickey's reply is that no-one is innocent and that he knows a lot of people who deserve to die. Mickey calls himself "fate's messenger". Mickey tells how he regrets killing the Indian and says that the Indian saw the demon. Mickey then says that everyone has the demon inside them. Mickey talks of the dream he had when he killed the Indian, it is a dream he has been having since childhood. Mickey talks about the moment of realisation saying, "the moment of realisation is worth a million prayers". He stands up (we see his shadow on the wall) and says "you can't get rid of your shadow, Wayne" and then says, "the only thing that kills the demon, love". Cut to adverts.

Scene 31: Mallory's cell

Several guards let Scagnetti into Mallory's cell. They tell him not to get too close because she will kill him, Scagnetti laughs and says, "haven't you read my book". Scagnetti closes the door and is alone with Mallory.

Scene 32: "American Maniacs" Interview with Mickey Knox

Gayle asks what it is like to kill someone, Mickey says, "you'll never understand, Wayne". Mickey says to Gayle, "I used to be you but then I evolved," then he says "media is like the weather but manmade, murder is pure". Gayle persists in asking him what it is like for him and Mickey says, "hell, I'm a natural born killer". Cut to adverts.

Scene 33: Prison riot

The inmates have been watching the interview on television and start a riot.

Scene 34: "American Maniacs" Interview Room

McClusky tells Gayle he has to stop filming because there is a riot in the recreation room. Gayle protests. Mickey looks as if he can make use of this situation.

Scene 35: Prison riot

Inmates are running around, smashing things up, fighting, general mayhem.

Scene 36: "American Maniacs" Interview Room

Mickey is walking around with no constraints telling jokes to the guards and film crew. They all begin to relax and laugh at his jokes. Mickey distracts one of the guards and snatches his gun. Mickey starts killing the guards until he is left with Gayle, a camera man, a female member of the film crew, and two guards. Mickey asks the guards to take him to Mallory's cell and tells the camera man to film them, Gayle commentates.

Scene 37: Mallory's cell

Mallory and Scagnetti are talking. Scagnetti tells Mallory he killed someone. Mallory tells Scagnetti that she thinks about sex, Scagnetti is aroused and begins to undress. Mallory asks him what he wants her to do, Scagnetti says, "kiss me and squeeze my nipple" she does saying, "you're so specific, you like a little pain?". Scagnetti is more aroused as she kisses him. Mallory attacks Scagnetti and the guards come rushing in and restrain Mallory. Scagnetti squirts maze in Mallory's eyes.

Scene 38: Newsdesk

The newsreader announces a special report about Gayle reporting live from a prison riot.

Scene 39: Mallory's cell

Mickey arrives at Mallory's cell. Mickey kills the guards. Gayle commentates. Scagnetti and Mickey point their guns at each other. Unknown to Scagnetti, Mallory gets up behind him with a knife and cuts his throat. Mallory runs over and kisses Mickey, Gayle commentates. Mickey

points his gun at Scagnetti but has no bullets left, Mallory picks up a gun and aims at Scagnetti saying, "do you like me now, Jack?" and shoots him dead.

Scene 40: Prison security room

McClusky is assessing the riot situation on monitors when a guard tells him that Mickey and Mallory are free, Scagnetti is dead and they are live on network television.

Scene 41: Prison riot

Gayle has a gun and starts shooting at people like a mad man saying, "I'm alive for the first fucking time in my life". An inmate, Owen, says he can show Mickey and Mallory a way out. Mickey and Mallory and their hostages come face to face with McClusky only McClusky is trapped behind railings. Owen leads them to a place to hide.

Scene 42: The hiding place

Mickey and Mallory tell each other they love each other. Mallory says they should go out of the front door and go out in a hail of bullets. Mickey says they will if all else fails.

Scene 43: McClusky at the railings

Hundreds of inmates come running toward McClusky, McClusky looks frightened.

Scene 44: The hiding place

Mickey and Mallory and their hostages make their way along the corridor, down some stairs, and presumably outside.

Scene 45: The Woods

Mallory interviews Gayle about what happened during their escape. Mickey and Mallory decide that the riot was fate. Mallory says that she has been thinking about motherhood. Mickey and Mallory say to Gayle they are going to kill him, he protests saying they usually leave someone alive, Mickey says they have, the camera. Gayle protests again. Mickey says, "killing you and what you represent, it's a statement". Both Mickey and Mallory aim at Gayle shoot him.

Scene 46: Newsdesk

The newsreader realises what has happened and looks shocked and upset.

[Clips of newsreel material covering recent renowned court cases in America]

Scene 47: Mobile home

Mickey is driving, Mallory is sat down, pregnant already with two children.

Flashbacks of scenes from the film.

Credits.

5.6 Analysis of Reviews about *Natural Born Killers*

Natural Born Killers has developed a reputation as a controversially violent film in the United Kingdom. An analysis of literature about this film was conducted in order to illustrate both the positive and negative reviews published.

The story of *Natural Born Killers* is summarised by Bouzereau (1996):

"Mickey (Woody Harrelson) and Mallory (Juliette Lewis) are a perfect couple in the sense that they share the same passion - and talent - for violence and murder. Mallory lives with an abusive, foul, incestuous, and repulsive father (Rodney Dangerfield) and an idiot mother; she is rescued by Mickey, who shows up one day carrying fifty pounds of dripping raw meat. Together they beat Daddy to death and set Mom ablaze. And that's just the beginning. As they continue their rampage, the public and the media eat it up. Sleazy TV journalist Wayne Gayle (Robert Downey Jr.) makes Mickey and Mallory cult heroes on his reality-based show *American Maniacs*. The couple is eventually arrested by a corrupt and homicidal cop named Jack Scagnetti (Tom Sizemore), who dreams of writing a book on Mickey and Mallory. In jail, the two are harassed by Scagnetti and by maniacal prison warden Dwight McClusky (Tommy Lee Jones), who wants to achieve media fame as the man who put them to death. Wayne Gayle sets about doing the television show of the century by interviewing Mickey and Mallory behind bars. But Mickey manages to grab a rifle and instigates a riot in the prison. After shooting Scagnetti and leaving McClusky to be butchered by his inmates, Mickey and Mallory escape with Wayne Gayle, who insists on going along. Free at last, Mickey and Mallory kill Wayne while his video camera is rolling on him and escape. The film concludes with a quick montage of the John Wayne Bobbitt and Menendez brothers trials, O. J. Simpson, Tonya Harding, and with pulsing on the soundtrack for the end credits, Leonard Cohen's "Get ready for the future, it is murder"." (Bouzereau, 1996: 53-4)

The filming style of *Natural Born Killers* is somewhat unique and features regularly in critics' descriptions of it, for instance:

"*Natural Born Killers* [. . .] is a hallucinatory trip, a satire on America's culture of violence and our country's obsession with true crime and its encouragement by the tabloid media." (Bouzereau, 1996: 54)

"NBK plunders every visual trick of avant-garde and mainstream cinema - morphing, back projection, slow motion, animation and pixillation on five kinds of film stock - and, for two delirious hours, pushes them in your face like a Cagney grapefruit. The actors go hyper-hyper, the camera is ever on the bias, the garish colors converge and collide, and you're caught in this Excedrin vision of America in heat. The ride is fun too, daredevil fun of the sort that only Stone seems willing to provide in this timid film era. NBK is the most excessive, most exasperating, most ... let's just say it's the most movie in quite some time." (Corliss, 1994: 2)

The subject matter of *Natural Born Killers*, like its style, is controversial and has provoked much media attention:

"The film was controversial before it was released; the media frenzy over the O. J. Simpson case as well as the coverage of the Menendez, Bobbitt, and Harding trials

were proving the film's message right. What Oliver Stone had meant as a satire had become a frightening reality. "When we set out to make *Natural Born Killers* in late 1992, it was surreal. By the time it was finished in 1994, it had become real. In that warped season, we saw Bobbitt, Menendez, King, Buttafuoco, and several other pseudo-celebrities grasp our national attention span with stories of violence, revenge, and self-obsession. Each week, America was deluged by the media with a new soap opera, ensuring ratings, money, and above all, continuity of hysteria." (Bouzereau, 1996: 56)

"Slick, intriguing, repellent and, thanks to the lurid media it implicitly criticizes, ludicrously over-hyped, Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* has opened. It's single showing at the London Film Festival in November [1994] was the season's hottest ticket, but the British censors then turned squeamish and considered a total ban. The controversial saga of a couple (Woody Harrelson, Juliette Lewis) whose cross-country killing spree makes them media darlings and role models, intended by Stone as a satire on the horror of tabloid culture, misses the mark. Instead, it comes across as a morally dubious excursion into grotesque violence, filmed with breathtaking expertise." (Karney, 1997: 858)

"The UK rental video release of the film was originally scheduled for 22 March 1996, but delayed out of respect for the victims of the Dunblane shooting tragedy. On 16 May 1996, Warner Bros Home Video announced that the release of the tape had been postponed 'indefinitely'." (Barnes and Hearn, 1996: 175)

"A movie which has polarised opinion like few other films of recent years, *Natural Born Killers* both lives up to expectations and fails to meet the hype. Violence is ever present (in almost every major character), yet far more is implied than is ever shown explicitly. More disturbing still is the impression that such mass murder is indigenous within our society (at least within the States), fuelled by a combination of broken homes and media worship." (Cannon, 1997: 1-2)

"*Natural Born Killers*, the new outrage from Hollywood's most audacious auteur, takes a wild look at America's infatuation with twisted minds. The \$34 million movie is so manic, so violent, so seemingly at one with the subject it satirizes, that Warner Bros. was reportedly spooked about a potential fire storm. Now the execs say they are feeling better, "I'm encouraged and excited," says marketing boss Rob Friedman. "The media response has been overwhelmingly positive." (Corliss, 1994: 1)

"The family of a Louisiana woman say she was shot in a robbery inspired by Oliver Stone's film *Natural Born Killers* have been given permission to sue the director. [. . .] It is alleged that Stone, Time Warner Inc. and others involved in directing, producing or distributing the film should be held responsible and pay damages because they made a film that intended to make people violent." (Whitworth, 1999: 14)

In response to comments about the controversy surrounding his film, Stone claims that it is a satire which explores the violence and corruption within American society:

"Well, let me say that the picture is exaggerated and that's why I got a lot, again, misunderstood in a sense, but I call it a satire because the actions were larger than life. There was no intentions behind the questions of suffering; this is not a film about suffering like I had done about *Platoon* or *Born on the Fourth of July*, which were films about people who got hurt by violence. This was not about that; there are no victims in this movie, although people drop dead. It's sort of satiric. In a sense, it's like a fun-house mirror; you look into it and you see yourself distorted. It

also has some truth in it; it's a way of understanding the world, and I always felt that America is so exaggerated that I have to exaggerate it even more to reflect back the kind of craziness that we have in our culture, not just the television culture but also a culture of hype." (Stone, cited in Bouzereau, 1996: 59-60)

"[Tarantino's] original draft was more about the film crew and the Wayne character, and Mickey and Mallory were just stick figures, they were supporting cast, and I really wanted to get into them. I also wanted a level of sociopolitical commentary that he didn't want to deal with." (Stone, cited in Bouzereau, 1996: 60)

"I think that ultimately this film is not about violence. The film is not about good and bad; it's about do you understand it or don't you. The film is very disturbing to me, too; it's also very ambivalent. There is no single message to this film, you know." (Stone, cited in Bouzereau, 1996: 62)

"[The Indian] was touched by civilisation; I always considered him a killer actually. I always thought like he had been corrupt but that he was living as a renegade outside society. It's like the Buddhist ideal; he's seen the world, and he stepped outside the world. He understood. So when they kill him, they change, and if you look at the film closely, the whole motivation for the second part of the movie is for them to get back together. They're not into killing per se; they just kill in order to get back together. At the end, they only kill Wayne because if they don't they won't have any freedom. Ultimately, they have to hide from the media; so they wipe out the media, they go underground, and they're happy, they have kids. So, yes, it is Romeo and Juliet for the nineties. But a lot of people missed that. You see, the other thing that the film does which is very interesting, it provokes people because it's structured subjectively, it's some kind of virtual reality trip, you're in the mind of a killer, and you kill and you enjoy it. They have fun killing, and you enjoy it, and the audience, to some degree, has fun killing, and some people get very upset because they suddenly realize that they're enjoying it." (Stone, cited in Bouzereau, 1996: 66)

Further, Stone offers his own theory about America's fascination with violence:

"There's nothing wrong with watching violence. Forget about the politically correct people; think about the world and the world is violent; the nature of the world is extremely violent. We're born in an act of birth which is extremely violent; kids are very cruel. People forget that, so there is a natural-born fascination with watching what I call the approach of death because we all know that we're going to die. We're all in touch with that knowledge, and we're fascinated by it, we are." (Stone, cited in Bouzereau, 1996: 68)

However, some critics are unconvinced by these arguments and believe that Stone has failed to produce the valuable satire he intended:

"The result is fascinating, if only because it reveals the literal-minded pretensions of a filmmaker who, despite being an eloquent communicator, fails to grasp the concept of satire (so vital to Quentin Tarantino's original, largely rewritten screenplay) and leaves the viewer with little room for individual interpretation." (Shannon, 1999: 1)

"'Natural Born Killers' is Stone, the bad-boy outsider, at full throttle. In telling the lurid story of mass-murdering lovebirds Mickey and Mallory (Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis), Stone uses the movie screen as a toxic waste dump for all the

poisons in our culture. If America is a party, with its mindless sitcoms, pseudo-newscasts and tabloid sensationalism, Stone crashes it and pukes in the punch bowl. It's a purgative work, but one that does Stone more good than it does us.[. .] In Stone's nightmare fantasy, there is no justice, no cause and effect; the good suffer and the sick go unpunished." (Hinson, 1994: 1 and 2)

"The main problem with "Killers," though, is that it degenerates into the very thing it criticizes. Taken from an original story by Quentin Tarantino ("Reservoir Dogs", "Pulp Fiction") and expanded by Stone, David Veloz and Richard Rutowski, "Killers" is intended as a gonzo critique of the mass media and, by extension, of the bloodthirsty legions of couch potatoes whose prurient taste guarantees that the garbage rises to the top of the charts. But the film doesn't make it as a piece of social criticism. Primarily this is because the movie's jittery, psychedelic style is so obviously a kick for Stone to orchestrate. Bloody, pulpy excess is his thing; it's what he does best." (Hinson, 1994: 2)

Natural Born Killers was originally written by Quentin Tarantino. The end product, however, is a film with which Tarantino does not wish to be associated. This is illustrated by his request to be omitted from the credits as writer of the script; the final version read, "From a story by Quentin Tarantino" (Clarkson, 1995). In addition, the central plots of each version, i.e. Tarantino's script and Stone's film, are distinct:

"Although undoubtedly a radical revision of Tarantino's 1989 script, Oliver Stone's \$35 million film of *Natural Born Killers* added more than it took away. While Tarantino's script concentrated on TV anchorman Wayne Gayle, Stone shifted the emphasis onto serial killers Mickey and Mallory Knox, fleshing out their characters and motivation in the process. Tarantino was unimpressed: 'My script was pure,' he lamented. 'I wish he'd left it alone'." (Barnes and Hearn, 1996: 175)

In short, this brief investigation has revealed that *Natural Born Killers* is best described as controversial. The making of the film, critics' evaluations of it, and the response of the media all point towards a piece of cinematic film which is shocking, vividly violent yet which attempts to convey a cautious warning about the growth of trash-junk culture in the 1990s.

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5.7 Inquiry Group Schedule

Each inquiry group focused upon three clips from the key text, *Natural Born Killers*. In order to apply a loose structure the discussion the following schedule was used. On the left hand side of the table are the general areas to be discussed and the right are the questions which were sometimes used to prompt the participants.

<i>Natural Born Killers</i>	
Initial responses to the three clips	What do you think about the scenes you have just watched?
The clips [the three clips, <i>Scenes 1, 6 and 13</i> in turn]	What did you think about this clip? What is your opinion about the representations of violence in this clip? What impression do you get of Mickey and Mallory in this clip? What impression do you get of Mickey and Mallory's family in this clip? How violent do you think this clip is in comparison to the other two? Do you think the violence was acceptable or unacceptable in this clip?
The violence	What do you think about the level of violence in this film? Do you think the violence in this film is acceptable? Have you seen similar violence in other films?
The characters	What do you think about Mickey? What do you think about Mallory? What do you think about the other characters in this film? Can you identify or relate to Mickey and Mallory in any way?
The story of the film	To those who have seen the whole film: What is your opinion about the story told in this film? To those who have not seen the whole film: What is your impression of the story told in this film?
Comparison to other films	Are there any other films which you would put in the same category as <i>Natural Born Killers</i> ? What genre would say <i>Natural Born Killers</i> belongs to?
Comparison with real life violence	Do you think the violence in this film can be compared to real life events?
Overall evaluation of <i>Natural Born Killers</i>	To those who have seen the whole film: What did you think about <i>Natural Born Killers</i> ? Did you enjoy it? To those who have not seen the whole film: From what you have seen do you think you would like to see the whole film?